



INNER DIMENSIONS OF THE PRAYER

Imām ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (d. 751H)



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Imām ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah [d. 751H]

Inner DIMENSIONS of the PRAYER

Comparison of Differing Experience between
Performing *Salāh* and Listening (to Music)

being a translation of his work

*‘Asrār al-Ṣalāh wa’l-Farq wa’l-Mawāzīnah bayna
dawq al-Ṣalāh wa’l Samā’*,



“It is the believers who are successful:
those who are humble in their
prayer.”

[*al-Mu'minūn* (23): 1]

Inner Dimensions of the Prayer

And Comparison of Differing Experience
between Performing *Salāh* and Listening (to Music)

by Imām Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah

First Published in Great Britain July 2013 / Ramadan 1434H
by Dār as-Sunnah Publishers



DĀR AS-SUNNAH PUBLISHERS
P.O. Box 9818, Birmingham, B11 4WA, United Kingdom

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British Library Cataloguing in publication Data.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Title: Inner Dimensions of the Prayer
by Imām ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah
Translated from the original Arabic by Aymān ibn Khālid

ISBN 1-904336-37-X
Paper-back

Typeset by: Dār as-Sunnah Publishers
First Edition, 1434 ^{AH}/2013 ^{CE}

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I B N Q A Y Y I M A L - J A W Z I Y Y A H

May Allāh have mercy upon him

His Name:

HE IS THE IMĀM, THE HĀFIZ, the exegete, the legal jurist, Shaykh al-Islām: Abū ‘Abdullāh Shamsu-d-Dīn Muḥammad Ibni Abū Bakr - better known as Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah.

His Birth and Education:

He was born into a noble and knowledgeable family on 7th Safar 691H in the village of 'Zar', near Damascus, Syria.

From an early age he set about acquiring knowledge of the Islāmic sciences from the scholars of his time. Describing his desire for knowledge, al-Hāfiẓ Ibni Rajab, *Dhayl Tabaqāt-l-Hanābilah* [4/449] said, 'He had an intense love for knowledge, for books, publications and writings.'

Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah wa-n-Nihāyah* [14/235] said, 'He acquired from such books what others could not acquire, and he developed

a deep understanding of the books of the Salaf and of the Khalaf.'

His Teachers and Shaykhs:

'They include Shihāb an-Nāblusī, Qādī Taqī ad-Dīn ibn Sulaymān, from whom he studied ḥadīth; Qādī Badr ad-Dīn ibn Jamā'ah; Ṣafī ad-Dīn al-Hindī; Ismā'īl ibn Muḥammad al-Harrānī, from whom he studied fiqh and usūl; and also his father, from whom he learnt the laws of inheritance.'

However, the most notable of his teachers was Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah, whom he accompanied and studied under for sixteen years. Al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Kathīr (14/234) said, 'He attained great proficiency in many branches of knowledge; particularly knowledge of *tafsīr*, ḥadīth, and *usūl*. When shaykh Taqī ad-Dīn ibn Taymiyyah returned from Egypt in the year 712H, he stayed with the shaykh until he died; learning a great deal of knowledge from him, along with the knowledge that he had already occupied himself in attaining. So he became a unique scholar in many branches of knowledge.'

His Manners and Worship:

Many of his students and contemporaries have born witness to his excellent character and his manners of worship. Ibn Rajab (4/450) said,

He - may Allāh have mercy on him - was constant in worship and performing the night prayer, reaching the limits in lengthening his prayer and devotion. He was constantly in a state of *dhikr* and had an intense love for Allāh. He also had a deep love for turning to Allāh

in repentance, humbling himself to Him with a deep sense of humility and helplessness. He would throw himself at the doors of Divine obedience and servitude. Indeed, I have not seen the likes of him with regards to such matters.

Ibn Kathīr (14/234) said,

He was constant in humbly entreating and calling upon his Lord. He recited well and had fine manners. He had a great deal of love and did not harbour any envy or malice towards anyone, nor did he seek to harm or find fault with them. I was one of those who most often kept company with him and was one of the most beloved of people to him. I do not know of anyone in the world in this time, who is a greater worshipper than him. His prayer used to be very lengthy, with prolonged bowing and prostrations. His colleagues would criticise him for this, yet he never retorted back, nor did he abandon this practice. May Allāh bestow His mercy upon him.

His Students and Works:

Amongst his most prominent students were: Ibn Kathīr (d.774H), adh-Dhahabī (d.748H), Ibn Rajab (d.751H) and Ibn 'Abdu-l-Hādī (d.744H), as well as two of his sons, Ibrāhīm and Sharafu-d-Dīn 'Abdullāh.

Ibnu-l-Qayyim authored over sixty works. His books and writings are characterised by their touching address to the heart and soul, as well as their accuracy, precision, strength of argument and depth of research.

In the field of fiqh and usūl, his writings include: *I'līmu-l-Muwaqqibīn*; *Turuqu-l-Hukmiyyah*; *Ighāthatu-l-Lahfān*; *Tuhfatu-l-Mawlūd*; *Ahkām Ahlu-l-Dhimmah*; and *al-Furūsiyyah*.

In the field of ḥadīth and sīrah they include: *Tabdhib Sunan Abī Dāwūd*; *al-Manāru-l-Munīf*; *Fawā'id al-Hadīhiyyah*; *Jalā'u-l-Afshām*; and *Zādu-l-Ma'ād*.

In the field of beliefs: *Ijtīmā' al-Juyūsh al-Islāmiyyah*; *as-Ṣawā'iqu-l-Mursalab*; *Shīfā'u-l-'Alīl*; *Hādiyyu-l-Arwāḥ*; *al-Kāfiyatū-sh-Shāfiyyah*; and *Kitāb ar-Rūḥ*.

In the field of akhlāq (morals) and tazkiyah (purification): *Madāriju-s-Sālikīn*; *ad-Dā' wa-d-Dawā'*; *al-Wābilu-s-Ṣayyib*; *al-Fawā'id*; *Risālatu-t-Tabūkiyyah*; *Miftāḥ Dār as-Sā'ādah*; and *'Uddatu-s-Ṣābirīn*.

In the sciences of the Qur'ān: *at-Tibyān fī Aqsāmi-l-Qur'ān*; and *Amthāl al-Qur'ān*.

In language and miscellaneous issues: *Badā'i al-Fawā'id*.

Two books have also been written collating the exegetical comments of ibn al-Qayyim from his various works: *Tafsīr al-Qayyim* and *Tafsīr al-Munīr*.

A few of his works have also been translated into the English language: the Magnificent Journey; the Invocation of God; Medicine of the Prophet; *Zād al-Ma'ād*.

Statements of the Scholars about him:

Ibn Rajab (4/44) said,

He had deep knowledge concerning *tafsīr* and the fundamentals of the religion, reaching the highest degree concerning them both. Similar was the case in the field of *ḥadīth*, with regards to understanding its meanings, subtleties and deducing rulings from them. Likewise was the case in the field of *fiqh* and its *usūl*, as well as the Arabic language. He did a great service to these sciences. He was also knowledgeable about rhetoric, grammar, and *sulūk* as well as the subtleties and details that occur in the speech of the people of *tasawwuf*.

Al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar, *ad-Duraru-l-Kāminah* (4/21),

He possessed a courageous spirit as well as vast and comprehensive knowledge. He had deep knowledge concerning the differences of opinions of the Scholars and about the ways of the Salaf.

Ibn Ḥajar also said in his commendation to *ar-Raddu-l-Wāfir*,

And if there were no virtues of shaykh Taqī ad-Dīn [Ibn Taymiyyah], except for his famous student, shaykh Shamsu-d-Dīn ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah - the author of many works, which both his opponents and supporters benefited from - this would be a sufficient indication of his [Ibn Taymiyyah's] great position.

al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Nāṣir ad-Dimishqī, *ar-Raddu-l-Wāfir* [p. 69] said,

He possessed knowledge of the sciences, especially *tafsīr* and *usūl*.

He also said:

Abū Bakr Muḥammad Ibn al-Muhib said, as found in his letter, “I said in front of our Shaykh, al-Mizzī, ‘Is Ibnu-l-Qayyim at the same level as Ibn Khuzaymah?’ He replied, ‘He is in this time, what Ibn Khuzaymah was in his time.’”

As-Suyūṭī, *Bughyatu-l-Wi‘āt* [1/62] said,

His books had no equal and he strove and became one of the great Imāms in [the field of] tafsīr, ḥadīth, the Book, the Sunnah, furū‘, and the Arabic language.

‘Alī al-Qārī, *al-Mirqāt* [8/251],

It will be clear to whoever aspires to read the explanation of *Manāzilu-s-Sā’irīn* [i.e. *Madārij as-Sālikīn*], that they [Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibnu-l-Qayyim] are from the great ones of *Aḥlu-s-Sunnah wa-l-Jamā‘ah*, and from the *awliyā’* of this Ummah.

Qādī Burhān ad-Dīn az-Zur‘ā said as quoted from him in *Dhayl Tabaqāt al-Hanābilah*,

There is none under the heavens who has greater knowledge than he.

His Death:

Imām Ibnu-l-Qayyim passed away at the age of sixty, on the 13th night of Rajab, 751H, may Allāh shower His Mercy upon him.

CHAPTER ONE

With the Name of Allāh, the All-Merciful, the Most Merciful

IMĀM MUHAMMAD IBN ABĪ BAKR Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, may Allāh bestow His Mercy upon him, said:

This is a discourse on the inclination towards listening to music and songs versus the affinity to *salāh* and the Qur’ān - offering a detailed account of how the experience derived from the Qur’ān and *Salāh* is antithetic to that of music and singing. It will also elucidate the inverse relation between the two inclinations and the manner in which the strength and influence of one necessitates the weakness and ineffectiveness of the other [i.e. the stronger the yearning for music and singing is, the weaker shall the attachment to *salāh* (and Qur’ān) be].

1.1 The *Salāh* is tranquility for worshippers and Allāh's gift to the believers

1.1 The *Salāh* is tranquility for worshippers and Allāh's gift to the believers

It is imperative for you to know that *salāh* is, without any doubt, the domain of tranquility for devotees (*mubibbin*), the enjoyment of the souls of monotheists (*muwahidin*), the garden of the worshippers (*ābidin*), the essence of enjoyment of the humble ones (*khāshi'īn*), the test of the sincere ones (*sādiqīn*), and the scale measuring the mettle of those embarking the right path (*salikīn*). It is truly a divine Mercy that Allāh has gifted to His believing servants that He has Guided them to, and acquainted them with. He delegated His truthful and honest Messenger, Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ), to deliver this gift to His believing servants in order that they may attain a noble status with Him. Through its means He dignifies, honours and showers them with His Mercy, and allows them to win His nearness. He bestows upon His believing servants all this although He is in no need of them, He just wants to lavish them with this gracious gift to show His Favour upon them and bring their hearts and bodies altogether into His servitude.

He, the Most Exalted, endows the heart of the knower of Allāh¹ by enabling him to reap the best of its harvest; turning to Him, Exalted be He, rejoicing in His closeness, basking in His love, enjoying standing before Him [in *salāh*], dismissing everything except Him [from his heart] as soon as he commences worship, and fulfilling the rights of his servitude to Him, inwardly and outwardly, in order for his worship to be in a manner that pleases Allāh.

Even as Allāh tested His servants by creating them with innate

¹'The one who recognises the true status of Allāh; hence acts upon this knowledge by living as His real slave.

lusts and desires (*shahwa*) and exposing them to external temptations, His Mercy and Kindness mandated that Allāh, the Most High, give His servants a feast² [i.e. *salāh*] comprising of several kinds of delicacies, nourishments, gifts and grants³ [to help them repel these desires and temptations]. And He did invite them to attend this banquet on a daily basis not once, but five times a day - and he distinguished each served course of this banquet [i.e. the actions of *salāh*] with a unique flavour and a special benefit to perfect the pleasures and complement the benefits they attain, and (help them to) perfect their '*ubūdiyah* [servitude] to Allāh. Thus, not only did He make every act of worship performed in *salāh* a means of remedy to atone for the (minor) sins they committed, but rewarded them with a special light for praying. In fact, *salāh* brings forth light and strength into the heart (*qalb*), increases the share of one's provision in this life, inspires others to love (*muhabba*) the one who prays, and lets Angels and also the earth with its mountains, trees and rivers rejoice. Furthermore, on the Day of Judgment, when the believing servants [of Allāh] meet their Lord, their *salāh* shall turn into light and transform into reward.

Before attending the feast their hearts endured starvation, thirst and nakedness but as soon as they commence the worship [i.e. *salāh*], all that shall change to become the opposite, hence they shall leave the feast with stomachs full, throats moistened and bodies attired.

² Ibn Mas'ūd (*radīj Allāhu 'anhu*) used to say: "Indeed, this Qur'ān is the banquet of Allāh; so take from it as much as you can [i.e. learn from it] for I know nothing more unworthy than a house in which there is nothing of the Word of Allāh. The heart which contains nothing of the Word of Allāh, goes to ruin like a house in which no one lives." al-Dārimī

³ It is a metaphor referring to the actions of the *salāh*.

1.2 The Likeness of the Heart to the Earth

Due to the sterility and poverty [of indolence, disaffection, idleness, etc.] that the hearts (*qulūb*) and souls (*nūfūs*) endure time and time after, the invitation is renewed five times a day. However, the Mercy of Allāh necessitated that a gap of time pass between each invitation so the invitee is constantly calling for the rain from the One in whose Hand is the water to quench the hearts, and beseeching the clouds of His Mercy to have their water descend upon his heart in order that the trees of *īmān* and the harvest of *īhsān*, growing from this divine Mercy (i.e. *salāh*), do not dry out. The essence of these plants maintains their survival in his heart (*qalb*) and his soul (*rūh*); therefore the heart of the '*abd*' (of Allāh) continues to implore in humility for the rain (to fall upon his heart) from his Lord and invoke Him to relieve his heart from drought and thirst. This truly for the '*abd*' of Allāh is the way of life.

Indeed, the drought of hearts is heedlessness (*ghaflah*), but as long as the '*abd*' (of Allāh) is indulged in the remembrance of Allāh and constantly turning to Him, the rains of His Mercy will shower his heart abundantly. As soon as he becomes heedless however, drought shall strike his heart and the damage caused will be according to the degree of his heedlessness. This is because when inadvertency dominates and overwhelms the heart, its land becomes lifeless; it shall produce no harvest for reaping, and the fire of desires will scorch it from every side, leaving the land bare after it had once been rich with every different kind of vegetation. Nonetheless, as soon as the rains of Mercy fall upon the heart of the '*abd*' (of Allāh), the land of his *īmān* and deeds quivers, turns fertile causing every lovely kind to grow thereon, sustained and nourished by the life-giving water. When the land is

* *Abd*: pl. *'ebād*. slave, servant, worshipper.

deprived of water, the branches and leaves of its flora wither away, becoming fruitless; even the branches are bereft of benefit as they become rigid and fragile.

At this juncture, the wisdom of the One overseeing this garden dictates having these dried trees cut and making its wood a fuel for fire.

1.3 The heart becomes dry when devoid of *Tawhīd*

Similarly is the case with the heart of the 'abd (of Allāh), it becomes dried whenever it is devoid of:

- 1) Love (*bubb*) for Allāh
- 2) Knowledge about Him
- 3) His remembrance (*dhikr*)
- 4) Supplication and invocation
- 5) Most importantly, *tawhīd*

This is because the heat of desire (*nafs*) and the fires of lust (*shahwa*) infiltrating the heart cause the branches (i.e. limbs) to become unresponsive, inflexible and inert (whenever the 'abd of Allāh intends to employ them in good deeds). Under these circumstances, the tree including its branches is rendered useless; its only fitting use is as fuel for (Hell) fire.

Allāh said

فَوَيْلٌ
لِلْقَنِيْسَيَةِ قُلُّهُمْ مِنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أَوْ لِيَكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ

“Then woe unto those whose hearts are hardened against remembrance of Allāh. Such are in plain error.”

[*al-Zumar* (39): 22]

1.3 The heart becomes dry when devoid of Tawhīd

When the heart is watered with the rains of Mercy, the branches will be soft, moist, pliable and responsive; if you call them for the worship of Allāh, they submit and hasten to obey, letting you reap from each branch the fruits of (true) enslavement to Allāh, whose essence is the irrigation of the heart, which influences (the functioning of) the heart and the limbs. On the other hand, when the heart is parched and dried (i.e. rigid and hardened), the branches do not perform any good deeds because the essence of life is missing from the heart, thus the limbs are cut off from life accordingly. And even though each limb has been created and prepared to render a unique act of worship demonstrating an aspect of mankind's servitude to Allāh, the limbs cannot produce their anticipated harvest due to the incapacity and hindrance in their functioning.

1.4 Divisions of People in regards to the actions of the limbs

In light of this, people are of three kinds in regards to the actions of their limbs:

- 1) Those whose limbs are engaged in the service of their Lord, to fulfill the purpose for which they are created. They are among the successful 'merchants' who have made Allāh's obedience to be their trade and livelihood, from which they yield the greatest profits. *Salāh* has been prescribed in such a manner, that the entire body follows the lead of the heart- so that each limb practises its individual act of worship demonstrating its servitude to Allāh. These are the category of people who have realised the grace of Allāh upon them and have understood the true purpose behind the creation of their limbs, and therefore they dedicate their limbs to

worshipping their Lord, all the while safeguarding them from being involved in matters that may displease Him - so they fulfill the duties and responsibilities of their servitude to Allāh.

- 2) Those who utilise their limbs in pursuit of what they have not been created for, and dedicate them to committing sins and disobeying Allāh. They are the ones whose endeavors fail and whose trade is never successful - and because of that, they deserve Allāh's Punishment and Wrath and are precluded from receiving His Pleasure and Reward.
- 3) Those who completely suspend their limbs from engaging in any kind of productive activity; they neither serve the purpose for which they are created nor use them in obtaining the good of this worldly life, due to their ignorance and idleness. This group is even worse than the previous group, because mankind is created to worship and obey and not for incapacity (and impotence). In fact, the most despised people to Allāh are the useless type who are neither productive in this life nor endeavour to have a share in the Hereafter - they are condemned in every sense. If a person is condemned when his endeavour are dedicated for this life only, then he will without doubt be more condemned and be a greater failure when his endeavour are dedicated neither for this life nor for his Hereafter.

1.5 Parable in Three Types of People

The example of the first type is like a man who was granted a spacious land to farm and was supplied with all the instruments of need - tools, seeds and water - to help him in his work. After he prepared the land for farming, he planted all the varied types of vegetation, and he then surrounded the land with a big fence and hired guards to protect it. He kept a constant watch on his farm and looked after it; fixing any spoiled parts, replacing dead plants with fresh ones, removing the harmful weeds that grew around his trees, and spending from the profit he gained from selling its harvest towards its maintenance.

The example of the second type is like a man who after he got his hands on the land, made it into a sanctuary for dangerous beasts and animals, a site for dumping corpses and rotten bodies, and a hideout for thieves and every evil and abusive person. Even worse, he put all that he had been given to help him farm the land at the service of the evil ones dwelling in it.

The example of the third type is like a man who neglected the land and wasted the water in the desert and became regretful afterward.

These examples represent the three types of people: those who are mindful, the people of treachery, and the heedless ones respectively. The mindful ones are always ready and prepared to fulfill the purpose for which they are created unlike the treacherous ones who betray the trust placed in them and the people of negligence and heedlessness.

The affairs of righteous people, be it in their repose or activity,

upon taking a bite of food or a sip of drink, in their words or silences, in a state of sleep or awakening - is always earning them reward and counted in their favour. And their worship and remembrance of Allāh draws them nearer to Allāh. In contrast, the actions of the people of heedlessness are recorded against them and bring them nothing but failure and loss, not to mention distancing them from Allāh.

And the actions of those who betrayed the trust are performed while they are being engulfed by their inadvertency and dominated by their idleness and recklessness.

The grace surrounding the first group is a natural result of their obedience and acts of worship while the misery of the second group is a natural result of their transgression and treachery because Allāh did not grant them all that they have in order that they use it in disobeying Him - which is a betrayal of the trust assigned to them by Allāh. And, the heedlessness of the third group is a result of their being unmindful, and driven by their base-desires, therefore their failure and loss are notable as they waste their lifetime serving their own pleasures and overlooking the best of all trades (i.e. trading with Allāh).

The wisdom behind Allāh calling His believing slaves to the ritual of *salāh* five times a day is to manifest His Mercy upon them; hence he has facilitated for them within it a diverse abundance of actions and rites of worship so that His believing slaves may enjoy the reward of every word, action, silence and movement practiced therein.

1.6 The Secret and Essence of *Salāh*

The secret and essence of *salāh* lies in the inclination of the heart towards Allāh alone and focusing attention on Him while praying. Consider the case of a person whose heart is engaged in one's own thoughts and worldly affairs; he is like a person who visits the King intending to apologise for his own mistakes and shortcomings, beseeching rain from the clouds of His Generosity and Mercy to nourish his heart enough so it can be at His service. However as soon as he arrives at His doorstep and is on the verge of calling upon Him, he turns away from the King and instead starts to busy himself with things that are most disliked and disparaged by the King. Even as his heart is inclined toward trivial matters, he still sends forth his servants (i.e. limbs) to serve Him on his behalf and to excuse and compensate for the absence of his heart. But despite that, the Generosity and the Benevolence of the King refuse to dismiss the servants of his slaves without granting their master (i.e. slave of Allāh) a portion of His Mercy. But there is a big difference between the ones who wins and earns the trophy and those given a consolation prize out of Compassion and Mercy - Allāh said

وَلِكُلِّ دَرَجَتٍ مِّمَّا عَمِلُوا وَبِمَا فِيهِمْ أَعْمَلُوا هُمْ
لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿١٩﴾

“And for all there will be ranks from what they do, that He may pay them for their deeds! and they will not be wronged.”

[*al-Abqāf* (46):19]

Allāh Created mankind solely to worship Him, and He created everything else to be at mankind's service. It is related in a ḥadīth

qudsī that Allāh said: “O son of Adam, I created you to worship Me and created everything else for you. So, by My rights upon you, do not indulge in matters other than what I created you for.”⁴

In another narration: “O son of Adam, I created you to worship Me, so do not play (i.e. do not be involved in idle pleasures); I guaranteed your provision in this life so do not tire yourself (i.e. seek your provision but do not make it a concern because provisions are already decreed). O son of Adam, whenever you seek Me, you shall find Me. And, whenever you find Me, you shall find everything. But, if you were to lose Me, you would lose everything. Verily, I ought to be the most beloved One to your heart.”⁵

This is why Allāh, Most High, made the *salāh* the means through which people can be near Him, invoke Him, earn His love and enjoy His Company.

1.7 Experiencing detachment [from Allāh] during the intervals between the five daily prayers

The ‘abd (of Allāh) experiences times of heedlessness, detachment (from Allāh), hardening of the heart, disregarding mistakes, and disposes towards sinning during the intervals between the five daily prayers. This deplorable change takes him away from his Lord and prevents him from being near to Him and alienates him from his position as the (true) ‘abd of Allāh. Even worse, he may willingly deliver himself to his enemy (i.e. Satan) who cap-

⁴ Ibn Qayyim mentioned his narration in his *Tariq al-Hijratayn*. It is recorded by al-Manāwī in his *Fayd al-Qadīr*. However its source is not found in any of the books of ḥadīth and likely to be related from the People of the Book.

⁵ *ibid.*

1.7 Experiencing detachment [from Allāh] during the intervals...

tures him, puts him in chains and locks him in the prison of his base-desires, causing him to experience nothing but anxiety, grief, sorrow and regret while being unaware of the reason behind his wretched condition. It is through the Mercy of his Lord, the Most Compassionate, who decreed upon him a comprehensive act of worship made up of diverse phases and formats; each phase and format corresponds to the different actions he committed and conditions he experienced outside the *salāh*. More so, it is designed so that the goodness and benefit he acquires from each phase is in a measure proportionate to his needs, as this act of worship (i.e. *salāh*) is prescribed to demonstrate his servitude to Allāh.

*1.8 Discussion on *Wudū'**

Wudū' is the prescribed ritual whereby dirt and filth are cleansed and removed so Allāh's believing slave may stand pure in His presence. The effect of *wudū'* that manifests itself outwardly is the cleansing of the body and the limbs used in the act of worship (i.e. *salāh*). The inward effect on the other hand, is subtle, as it has to do with the purification of the heart from its sins through repentance. The two aspects of *wudū'* are inscribed in the statement of Allāh, Most High,

اللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ

“Indeed, Allāh loves those who are constantly repentant and loves those who purify themselves.”

[*al-Baqarah* (2): 222]

wherein He links repentance with purity, and the statement of the Prophet ﷺ:

«اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْنِي مِنَ التَّوَّابِينَ واجْعَلْنِي مِنَ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ»

“O Allāh, make me among those who turn to You in repentance and make me among those who are purified”⁶

wherein he prescribed for us to supplicate to be among the cleansed and among the repentant ones.

Allāh therefore, perfected for His believing ‘abd degree and layers of purity and servitude (to Him); inwardly and outwardly at every stratum; bearing witness that there is no *ilāh* worthy of worship except Allāh and that Muḥammad is His Messenger purifies him from disbelief and polytheism, turning to Him in repentance purifies him from sins, and using water in *wudū’* purifies him from visible filth.

1.9 Perfecting one’s servitude in attending the *Masjid*

In particular, Allāh prescribed that His ‘abd be in the most perfect level of purity (i.e. *wudū’*) prior to entering upon Him and standing before Him (i.e. in *salāh*) as only then does He, Exalted be He, grant permission for His ‘abd to stand in His presence - after he has become pure both from the outside and the inside, thus signifying that he is not a rebellious ‘abd. And when he enters His house (i.e. *masjid*), the place where he evinces his servitude to Allāh, he becomes one of His slaves. This explains the reason why attending the *masjid* to pray the compulsory *salāh* in congregation -which some scholars consider obligatory to do and others

⁶ Tirmidhi, #55.

consider highly commendable to do - is deemed from the aspects of perfection of one's servitude to Allāh.

The example of a heedless person is like a rebellious 'abd disobeying his master; he ceases to put his limbs and heart at the service of his Master, which is the sole purpose for which he is created. But, as soon as he comes back to his master, he effectively nullifies his state of disobedience and restores his state of obedience. And when he stands before Him in humility and submission (in *salāh*), the Compassion and Kindness of his Master overwhelms and engulfs him and accepts him after having rejected him before.

1.10 Servitude in *al-Takbīr*

The 'abd (of Allāh) is then ordered to stand with his face in the direction of the *qiblah* all the while having his heart facing Him as well (being fully attentive to Him) so as to renounce his previous state of rebellion and to stop turning away (from his Lord). The slave (of Allāh) should therefore stand up before his Master in humility and submission calling for His Compassion with his hands thrown at his sides and his head low, while at the same time his heart is fully attentive to Him in a state of humility, as he devotes all his senses to His service and glorification by declaring with his tongue and proclaiming in his heart that He is the Greatest, which is to express that Allāh is greater than anything he may have in his heart. And he affirms this statement by dismissing everything except Allāh from his heart so his heart is completely occupied with Allāh and nothing else. This is because occupying himself with anything else would connote that he finds what he is busy with is of more importance or greater than Allāh. Indeed, a person whose heart is busied with what distracts him from Allāh (in

salāh) is someone whose heart does not conform to the statement made by his tongue declaring Allāh is the Greatest. Having the heart in harmony with the tongue when saying that Allāh is the Greatest will strip the heart from the attire of arrogance as such garment does not befit the state of his enslavement to Allāh. Furthermore, it would prevent the heart from thinking of anything except Allāh. This is because the rights of these two words; Allāh is Greater than everything (الله أكْبَرُ), and the resolve to establish his servitude to Allāh through the *takbīr* protects the heart from the aforementioned defects (being occupied with something else other than Allāh and wearing a garment that does not befit the servitude to Allāh).

1.12 Servitude in *al-Istiftāh* [The Opening Supplication]

And when he says,

«سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ وَبِحَمْدِكَ»

“You are glorified O Allāh and praised! Your Name is Blessed”⁷

And then glorifies Him and praises Him in repetition with what befits Him, he comes out of the state of heedlessness that stands as a barrier between him and Allāh. Then, he greets and praises with expressions that befit His Kingship when someone enters upon Him, to glorify Him and as a prelude to his own needs and requests that he hopes the King to grant. This is why praising over and over again is considered from the etiquettes of express-

⁷ *Subbānāk Allāhūmma wa bibāndīka,*

1.12 Servitude in *al-Istiftāh* [The Opening Supplication]

ing one's servitude to Allāh and glorifying Him, and the means whereby the 'abd receives the attention of Allāh as well as His pleasure and approval to fulfill his requests.

1.13 The state of the 'abd in *al-Qirā'ah* and *al-Isti'ādhah*

As he is about to recite the Qur'ān, he precedes it by seeking refuge in Allāh from the accursed Satan who never spares any effort in his tireless endeavour, to bring about the downfall of the 'abd (of Allāh) - especially when the 'abd is in a station of utmost honour (i.e. *salāh*) while seeking to perform the single most beneficial deed for this life and the Hereafter. Hence, he (Satan) is fervently determined to prevent the 'abd (of Allāh) from praying by any means; failing to do so he wants to see to it that at the very least, his heart does not benefit from it (i.e. the *salāh*) by casting into his heart all sorts of whispers and thoughts to distract it from fulfilling the duties of servitude to Allāh. Therefore Allāh has ordered His slave to take refuge in Him from Satan (before starting his recitation in *salāh*) to assure the safety of his *salāh*, so that his heart may be revived and illuminated by the understanding he acquires from contemplating the words of Allāh as He is the Master in whose hand is the success, grace and life of his heart. This also explains why Satan is keen to distract his heart from understanding the words of Qur'ān when recited.

It is from Allāh's knowledge about the enmity and resentment of Satan against His believing slaves and their incapacity to face him that he ordained upon them to take refuge in Him from Satan so that He may suffice them against his evil and harm. It is as if He is saying to His slaves, you cannot win against this enemy;

thus take refuge in Me and I shall protect you against him and safeguard you from his evil and harm.

1.14 Ibn Taymiyyah's advice to Ibn Qayyim

Shaykh al-Islām, Ibn Taymmiyah, may Allāh honour his soul and illuminate his grave, once said to me (explaining with a metaphorical example the purpose of seeking refuge in Allāh from Satan): “If the shepherd’s dog ever barks at you attempting to attack you, then do not engage it in a fight. Instead, turn to the shepherd and seek his help for he will leash it and save you the trouble.” When a person takes refuge in Allāh from the accursed Satan, He protects him and keeps away Satan’s harm and evil from reaching him. This shall free his heart to explore the meanings of the Qur’ān and witness its fascinating, awe-inspiring wonders, and let him collect from its treasures and gems that no eyes have ever seen, no ears have ever heard, and no mind has ever conceived. It is only his base desires and Satan that stand as a barrier between him and all these wonders, because his base desires always incline towards the whispers and temptations of Satan. However, as soon as he distances himself from Satan and manages to expel him from his heart, the King takes over charge of his heart, holding it fast to the truth and reminding it of that which will assure its safety and everlasting happiness.

As the ‘abd (of Allāh) starts to recite the Qur’ān, he effectively begins addressing his Lord and invoking Him. Therefore, he should beware of invoking Him while his heart is busy with something else, as this shall make him deserving of His Contempt and Anger; he will be like a man upon whom a king bestowed his favour and then granted him the permission to speak before him, but as the man started to speak to the king he turned his back towards

1.14 Ibn Taymiyyah's advice to Ibn Qayyim

the king, turning his face away from him, which made the king angry and furious. And if this is the case among mankind, then the contempt and Anger of the King, the Lord of all Worlds, the Sustainer of Heavens and Earth, shall be beyond imagination.

1.15 The state of the 'abd in *al-Fātīhah*

A person should pause a little at the end of each *ayah* he recites from *al-Fātīhah* to wait for the response from his Lord; as if he is waiting to hear Him to say, "My 'abd has praised Me" when he recites;

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

"All Praises and thanks are due to Allāh, the Lord of all Worlds",

and "My 'abd has extolled Me" after reciting;

الْرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ

"The All-Merciful (*al-Rahmān*), The Most Merciful (*al-Rahīm*)",

and "My 'abd has glorified Me" after reciting;

مَلِكُ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ

"Master of the Day of Judgement"

and "This is between Me and My 'abd and My 'abd shall have what he requested" after reciting;

إِنَّا لَنَعْبُدُ وَإِنَّا لَنَسْتَعِنُ

“You Alone we worship and You Alone we ask for help.”⁸

Only the one who has experienced the true taste and sweetness of *salāh* can realise that no other statement could ever replace the *takbīr* and *al-Fātiḥah* in *salāh*, just as how no acts can ever replace the standing, bowing down, and prostration in *salāh*. This is because each act and each statement in *salāh* has a unique effect and comprises a distinctive experience, besides its representation of the worshipper’s servitude to Allāh.

The statement of Allāh;

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

“All Praises and thanks are due to Allāh, the Lord of all Worlds.”

confirms the perfection of Allāh’s Names and Attributes, and declares His transcendence above every defect and shortcoming,

⁸ Muslim, #775

On the authority of Abū Hurayrah (*radī Allāhu ‘anhu*) who said that the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said, Allāh, the Glorious and Exalted said, “I have divided the prayer between Myself and My servant equally and My servant shall be granted what he asked for.” Therefore when the servant says, ‘All praises and thanks are due to Allāh, the Lord of the worlds’, Allāh says, “My servant has praised Me.” When he says, ‘The All-Merciful, the Most Merciful,’ Allāh says, “My servant has extolled Me.” When he says, ‘Master of the Day of Judgement,’ Allāh says, “My servant has glorified Me.” When he says, ‘You Alone we worship and Your aid Alone do we seek,’ Allāh says, “This is between Me and My servant and My servant shall have what he requested.” When he says, ‘Guide us to the Straight Path, the Path of those whom You have favoured, not [the path] of those who have earned [Your] anger, nor of those who have gone astray,’ Allāh says, “This is for My servant and My servant shall have what he asked for.”

1.15 The state of the 'abd in *al-Fatībah*

be it in respect to His Names, Attributes or Actions. All His Actions comprise Wisdom, Mercy, Justice and Benefit, and all His Attributes are Perfect and Praised, and all His Names are Supreme and Beautiful.

1.16 The meanings of *al-hamd*

The praise entitled to Him fills up this worldly life and the Hereafter as does the heavens and earth and all that is between them and contained within them. The entire universe utters His Praise. The creation, its affairs, existence and non existence as well as its sustainability owe themselves to His Praiseworthiness. Truly, everything exists just to praise Him for it is the objective and purpose of every creature. Every object in existence attests to the praise that He is entitled to; the Messengers He sent and the Books He sent down entail that He be praised; the creation of Paradise and Hell calls for praising Him. Paradise inhabited with its people and Hell inhabited with its people testify to the praise He is entitled for.

The obedience and disobedience of mankind have not transpired except to testify to the praise Allāh is worthy of. The leaves of trees would not fall nor would atoms move, had it not been for His praise. Exalted be He, is praised for His Essence even if none of His slaves had ever praised Him, just as He is the One and Only *Ilāh* even if none of His slaves had been monotheists - and He is the true *Ilāh* worthy of worship even if none of His slaves had believed in Him. He praised Himself through the tongue of His Prophet; as the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said, "Allāh said on the tongue of His Prophet:

﴿سَمِعَ اللَّهُ لِمَنْ حَمِدَهُ﴾

“Allāh Hears the one who praises Him.”⁹

Keeping this in perspective it is evident that it is actually He who praises Himself on the tongue of His slaves, because when a person praises Him it is only due to His permission that such praise is uttered by their tongues, and is established in their heart through his permission. Truly, to Him is all the praise and to Him belongs everything; in His Hand lies all goodness; He is the absolute controller of everything, all that is apparent or hidden.

This is only a brief glimpse of the countless aspects of servitude to Allāh included in this statement *al-hamد*, it is only a drop of water out of the ocean of the knowledge of what servitude to Allāh comprises and entails.

From among the implications of being a true ‘abd to Allāh is to realize that the act of praising Him for a bounty that He bestowed upon you is itself worthy of praising Him again for it (i.e. praising Him) necessitates praising Him (again) for facilitating His praise on the tongue of His ‘abd perpetually. In reality, if a person were to devote every single one of his breaths towards praising his Lord for even a single bounty of His numerous blessings that He bestowed upon him, it would not be enough - this is because no one is capable of praising Him enough. And even if he does not praise Him for any of His graces upon him, he should praise Him for preventing harm from him (at least). Furthermore, he should praise Him for guiding him to praise Him.

Al-Awza‘ī said: I heard someone say: “All praise is due to Allāh;

⁹ Muslim, #404

1.16 *The meanings of al-hamd*

if not for a grace He bestowed, it is for a harm He prevented.”

Another aspect of servitude to Allāh in “*al-hamd*” is that it connotes an acknowledgment that were it not for Allāh’s guidance that inspired and enabled the ‘*abd* of Allāh to praise Him, he would be incapable of praising Him. He is therefore praised for it because He inspired his tongue and heart to praise Him; indeed no one would be guided if Allāh did not permit it.

From the other aspects of servitude to Allāh found in “*al-hamd*” is that it encompasses even the minutiae of the circumstances and state of affairs of the ‘*abd* (of Allāh); the hidden and the known, the loved and the despised. It even covers the details of the circumstances and conditions of mankind in its entirety; the righteous and the evil ones, the dignified ones and the abased ones. In reality He is to be praised for all of that, even if His slaves are unable to comprehend the wisdom behind it or realise the magnitude of praise He deserves for all of that. To praise Allāh is a manifestation of guidance that Allāh inspires in His slaves; some indulge in praising Him abundantly whereas there are others whose share is minimal, dependent on the level of knowledge one has about his Lord. The Prophet (ﷺ) said, “And then He will inspire me to praise Him with such praises as I do not know (now), I will praise Him with those praises and will fall down, prostrating before Him.”¹⁰

¹⁰ Bukhāri, #4435 and Muslim #193.

1.17 Servitude in “*Lord of all the worlds*”

Reciting the statement;

رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ 
“Lord of all the worlds”

wherein the servitude to Allāh manifests itself through the acknowledgment of the ‘abd (of Allāh) of the singularity and exclusivity of Allāh’s Lordship. And just as He is the Lord of the worlds, their Creator, the One who gives them livelihood and manages their affairs, and the One who suffices them, He is also their only *Ilāh* that they worship exclusively, take refuge in and turn to in times of need and hardship - for indeed He is the only Lord and the only *Ilāh* worthy of worship.

1.18 Servitude in “*The All-Merciful (al-Rahmān), The Most Merciful (al-Rahīm)*”

The statement of Allāh;

الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ 
“The All-Merciful (*al-Rahmān*), The Most Merciful (*al-Rahīm*)”,

comprises an aspect of servitude to Allāh that is exclusive to Him; when the ‘abd (of Allāh) recites it, he testifies to the All-encompassing Mercy of Allāh that covers everything and embraces every being; every creature enjoys a share of His Mercy. In reality, it is by His Mercy that His ‘abd stands up (in *salāh*) before Him; it

1.18 Servitude in “The All-Merciful (al-Rahmān), The Most Merciful.”

was related in a report that Angel Jibril says every night: “Let so-and-so get up (to pray) and let so-and-so remain asleep.”¹¹ It is the Mercy of Allāh that puts a person at His service to invoke Him with His divine words (i.e. Qur’ān), beseech His Mercy, Kindness and Guidance, and adjure Him to perfect His Grace upon him in this life and in the Hereafter. Indeed, His Mercy embraces all things just like how He embraces all things in His Knowledge, and His praise manifests in all things. Allāh said

رَبَّنَا وَسَعْتَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ بِرَحْمَةٍ وَعِلْمًا

“Our Lord! You comprehend all things in mercy and knowledge.”

[*Ghafir* (40): 7]

While, the favoured slaves bask in His Mercy, others are deprived from this Mercy as they are expelled from enjoying His exclusive Mercy (i.e. *salāh*).

1.19 Servitude in “Master of the Day of Judgement”

The aspect of servitude to Allāh that manifests itself in,

مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ

“Master of the Day of Judgement”

connotes the humility and submission of His slaves, as well as His Justice. It also calls upon the slave to abstain from being unjust to himself by avoiding sins, and to reflect upon the tenets

¹¹ Ibn Rajab mentioned in his book, “*Ikhtiyār al-Awlā Sharḥ Hadīth Ikhtisām al-Mala’ al-Ālā*.” In some reports it was said that Allāh, Most High, says every night: “O Jibril, let so and so get up (to pray), and keep so and so asleep (i.e. let them not get up to pray).

introduced in this *ayah*, namely: the affirmation of the Day of Judgment, and the sole authority of questioning and judging the creation (i.e. mankind and Jinn) for all their good deeds and wrong-doings resting with Allāh. All these tenets and meanings predicate His praise; Allāh said:

وَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْحَقِّ وَقَيْلَ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٧٥﴾

“And they are judged aright. And it is said: Praise be to Allāh, the Lord of the Worlds!”

[*al-Zumar* (39): 75].

It is also related that the entire creation, including the people of Paradise and the people of Hell, shall praise Allāh on that Day for His Justice and Grace.¹² This is why Allāh responds to the slave’s reciting “*All Praises and thanks are due to Allāh*” by saying: “*My ‘abd praised Me.*”

1.20 The meanings of *thandā*’ and *tamjīd*

Allāh is praised with His Attribute of Perfection in the first two verses: for the *ayah*,

الْرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١﴾

“The All-Merciful (*al-Raḥmān*), The Most Merciful (*al-Raḥīm*),

reiterates His Attributes of Perfection, to which His response was “*My ‘abd has glorified Me*”; this is because the Arabic word

¹² Allāh admits people into Paradise with His Mercy and He admits people into Hell with His Justice.

1.20 The meanings of *thana'* and *tamjid*

thana' refers to manifold praise that is offered to one who is worthy of being praised for his numerous commendable attributes. Therefore the statement, (الحمد لله) “*all praise is due to Him*” is considered *thana'* and the Most Compassion (to mankind), the Most Merciful (to believers)” is the attribution of the (praiseworthy) attribute of Mercy to Allāh. When the *ayah*,

سَلِّمْكَ يَوْمَ الْحِسْبَانِ ﴿١﴾

“Master of the Day of Judgement.”

is recited, the slave (of Allāh) ascribes to Allāh the sole ownership of authority on the Day of Judgment where His Justice, Pride and Glory as well as the truthfulness of His Messengers are manifested, and the reality that He is the true King to whom belong this world and Hereafter. In response to this *ayah*, Allāh says, “*My 'abd has glorified Me*” because this manner of praise is called glorification (*tamjid*) in that it entails praising Allāh with respect to His Attributes of Greatness, Glory, Justice and Kindness.

1.21 Servitude in “*You Alone we worship*”

After reciting the *ayah*,

إِنَّا لَنَعْبُدُ

“*You Alone we worship*”,

The 'abd (of Allāh) anticipates the response from his Lord, which is: “*This is between Me and My 'abd and My 'abd shall have what he requested..*”

You ought to reflect upon the aspects of servitude to Allāh that these words carry, as well as the responsibilities that come along

with each one of them. And, you ought to recognise the difference between the word that has been used in respect to Allāh and the word used in respect to His 'abd, and understand the reason and wisdom behind using them in such a manner. And, you ought to realise the difference between the dimension of *Tawhīd* conveyed in (إِلَيْكَ تَبَعُّدُ) "You Alone we worship", and the dimension of *Tawhīd* contained in (وَإِلَيْكَ نَتَسْتَعِنُ) "You Alone we ask for help", and then understand the purpose of placing this *ayah* in the middle - between the preceding *ayāh* pertaining to the praise of Allāh and the succeeding *ayāh* that comprise a supplication made by the 'abd to Allāh, and to understand the wisdom behind placing the part (إِلَيْكَ تَبَعُّدُ) "You Alone we worship" before (وَإِلَيْكَ نَتَسْتَعِنُ) "You Alone we ask for help", as well as the wisdom behind having the part [(عَزَّ) You Alone] precede the word [(تَبَعُّدُ) we worship], and the part [(كَفَى) You Alone] precede the phrase [(نَتَسْتَعِنُ) we ask for help].¹³

¹³ This form is used in Arabic to mean the exclusivity of worship to Allāh alone. This is because, in such format, the language does not allow to add another object or noun next to Him. In other words, it cannot associate another object or person with Him in this worship. However, if the *ayah* was phrased in the following order "we worship You", it will be possible linguistically to add next to Him another name. In other words, to structure the sentence "we worship you" will be as if it connotes the association of someone else with Allāh in worship whereas this possibility cannot be when the sentence is structured in the following manner "You (alone), we worship and someone else".

1.22 The wisdom behind *al-Isti'ānah*

I say: The wisdom behind having the part (إِنَّكَ مُبْدِعٌ) “*You Alone we worship*” precede the part (وَإِنَّكَ مُسْتَعِدٌ) “*You Alone we ask for help*” is that the worship is intended for Allāh while the help is intended for the ‘abd. Allāh is the One to be worshipped and He is the One from whom help is to be sought. The part (إِنَّكَ مُبْدِعٌ) “*You Alone we worship*” is so the ‘abd declares that he devotes to Him all his worship, including good deeds performed with sincerity meaning that they are intended for His Sake only, and the beneficial knowledge that the person acquires by which he comes to know and love Him sincerely and truthfully. To be worshipped is Allāh’s right upon His ‘abd and seeking His Help includes asking His assistance in all his affairs. Every act of worship that is not facilitated by Allāh and which is not intended sincerely and truthfully for His sake alone shall be rendered null and void. And any attempt of asking help from anyone other than Allāh shall lead to nothing but humiliation and failure.

You should contemplate all the beneficial knowledge derived from this *ayah*, which shall safeguard, protect and maintain the pristine state of a slave’s servitude to Allāh from all deficiencies and harm. It is an evident demonstration of pure and true servitude to Allāh.

You also need to reflect upon how the entire message of the Qur’ān revolves around the meanings contained in this *ayah*, and not only that but also the purpose behind creation, the essence of religious commandments and prohibitions, of divine reward and retribution, and of this worldly life and the Hereafter. And reflect upon how these verses mention the greatest of all objectives (i.e. worship) and the most perfect of all means (seeking His Help),

and the compelling usage of the second-person narrative “*You*” instead of the third-person pronoun “*Him*”. Actually an entire volume could be dedicated to this particular topic as it were, but I do not wish to divert from the main theme of this chapter, otherwise I would have elaborated on it further. Nonetheless, the interested reader can refer to the book, ‘*Marāhil al-Sā’irin bayna Manāzil Iyyāka Na’bud wa Iyyāka Nastān*’ and the book ‘*Al Risalah al-Masriyyah*’ wherein I have expounded upon this topic in great detail.

1.23 The Need of the ‘abd for “*Guide us to the Straight Path*”

The ‘abd (of Allāh) should reflect deeply upon how the *ayah*,

أَهْدِنَا أَلِصْرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ①

“Guide us to the Straight Path”

Expresses his perpetual needs through the various meanings it comprises namely;

- 1) Knowing the truth
- 2) The way to it
- 3) Acting upon it
- 4) Holding fast to it, and
- 5) Calling for it and forbearing harm caused to you by those whom you call

Yet being in a state of perfect guidance cannot be realised unless the ‘abd (of Allāh) is able to receive complete guidance. Thus, whenever he falls short in some aspects pertaining to his ability to assimilate guidance, the state of his enlightenment will be affected

1.23 The Need of the 'abd for "Guide us to the Straight Path"

accordingly. This is because the 'abd (of Allāh) is in need of this guidance, both inwardly and outwardly, and in all his affairs.

1. 24 Divisions of guidance that the 'abd is in need of

The (following are) types of guidance that the 'abd is in need of:

- 1) Guidance to repent from all his wrongdoings, from deviated knowledge and insincere intentions. Hence, as the slave is in constant need to repent, he is always in need of this type of guidance.
- 2) Guidance to be acquainted with the finer details of the beliefs and actions that he has, in a broad sense, already been guided to.
- 3) Guidance to matters he requires in order to further perfect and increase his guidance.
- 4) To have guidance in matters that he needs in the future, just as he needed in the past.
- 5) Guidance to have sound beliefs in matters in which he lacks any belief.
- 6) Guidance to have sound beliefs in matters he has based upon wrong and deviated beliefs. This form of guidance abrogates his deviated beliefs and replaces them with the right and sound ones.
- 7) Guidance to have the will and desire in matters that he possesses the capability to do and that he ought to do, but for which he does not yet have the desire to carry out.
- 8) Guidance to have the desire as well as the capability to do things that he ought to but that he neither desires nor is capable of.
- 9) Guidance to maintain and preserve the sound beliefs, knowl-

edge and good deeds that he already possesses.

Indeed, asking for guidance is the greatest among all his needs and the most crucial of all his requests. For this reason, Allāh enacted that His slaves beseech Him for His guidance several times on a daily basis when he is in his best state, during the five obligatory prayers (i.e. *salāh*) because all this manifests the dire need of the slave to attain this guidance and how significantly important it is to him.

Additionally, Allāh clarifies that the path of those who are truly guided is different from the path of those who earned His anger (the Jews) and those who are astray (the Christians and others). From that perspective, mankind is divided into three types with respect to guidance:

- 1) Those whom Allāh favored with His guidance and preserved it for them. However, the individual share of the ones in this category depends on how much guidance each one of them has received.
- 2) Those who are astray because they have neither received guidance nor were prepared for it.
- 3) Those with whom Allāh is Angry because they recognised the truth but did not follow it.

The ones who are astray deviate from the truth because (in their quest for the truth) they become lost and bewildered and thus unable to find the right path, leading them to totally sever themselves from the truth and the knowledge leading to it. As for those who earned Allāh's Wrath, they are the ones who despite knowing the truth still deviated from it, and as a consequence never benefited from their knowledge because they refrained from acting upon the truth they knew. On the other hand, those whom

1. 24 Types of guidance that the 'abd is in need of

Allāh favoured with guidance stand apart by virtue of their guidance, knowledge, beliefs and deeds. And, Allāh is the Facilitator of Success and Guide to the truth.

1.25 Servitude in raising the hands

As the slave is about to bow down, it has been prescribed upon him to raise his hands as a show of his deference to the Command of Allāh and to manifest the servitude of his hands to Allāh, in adherence to the way of the Prophet (ﷺ), and as a gesture that beautifies the *salāh*. It is indeed the adornment of *salāh* and the expression of one's glorification to its parts.

Allāh has then instructed that he pronounce the keyword of *salāh*; that is to say *takbīr*, which he must do every time he intends to move from one pillar (of *salāh*) to another, as He has instructed the slogan of *hajj*; that is to say the *talbiyah*¹⁴ when the pilgrim moves from one act of *hajj* to another. All this so His 'abd knows that the secret of *salāh* lies in extolling and glorifying Allāh through worshipping Him alone.

The next act of bowing down is prescribed wherein the 'abd visibly demonstrates his submission before the Greatness of his Lord and shows humility before the Pride and Glory of his Lord.

¹⁴ "Labbayka Allāhummā Labbayk - (O Allāh! We are obedient to your orders, we respond to your call)"

1.26 Servitude in *al-Rukū'*

The praise of Allāh in this pillar is to bow his back down, lowering his head while his tongue utters the words:

«سُبْحَانَ رَبِّ الْعَظِيمِ»

“Glory be to my Lord, the Greatest.”¹⁵

Through this act, his heart, body and tongue submit to Allāh in a most sublime manner that brings together the feeling of humility, humbleness, Allāh’s glorification, and His remembrance - thus uniquely distinguishing his submission to Allāh from the submission of the slaves (i.e. people) to one another. This is because submission is the attribute of slaves and Glory is the attribute of the Lord.

The perfect state of servitude that manifests while bowing down is when the slave dismisses his ego, accepts his status as a slave of Allāh, and empties his heart from any glorification he might have had about anyone besides Allāh and replaces all that with his glorification of Allāh as the only *Ilāh* worthy of worship.

When the heart is overwhelmed by his glorification of His Lord, his glorification of himself or of any other created being will be dismissed from his heart.

Not notwithstanding the outward physical movement of the body when bowing down, this pillar is in reality an act of worship that is foremost prescribed to be performed by the heart; the physical movement of the body is a mere accessory to complete the pillar.

¹⁵ *Subḥāna Rabbīya'l 'Adhīm.*

Reported by Abū Dāwūd, Ibn Mājah and Tirmidhī

1.27 Servitude in *al-Qiyām*

As the ‘abd rises from the bowing position to stand upright once more, returning his body to its most fitting posture, it is prescribed that the ‘abd exalt Allāh to thank Him and praise Him for His bounties and for facilitating him and guiding him to experience this humility and submission that He prevented others from experiencing.

Just as the Qur’ān is prescribed for the ‘abd to recite while he was in the standing posture before bowing, Allāh prescribed for His slave to praise Him and glorify Him when he is standing erect after having risen from bowing. In fact, the effect of this pillar on the heart is unique; an effect that cannot be produced by anything except the act of the bowing that preceded it. It is an essential pillar similar to the other pillars of *salāh* such as bowing down and prostration. And for this reason the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) used to prolong this standing (after the bowing down) just as he prolonged the pillars of bowing and prostration, and he used to praise, glorify and extol Allāh much therein, and exalt Him as I have mentioned before when I explained the description of his *salāh*. He used to say in his night prayers (*qiyam al-layl*):

لَرَبِّ الْحَمْدُ، لَرَبِّ الْحَمْدُ

“To my Lord be all praise, to my Lord be all praise.”

repeating it until his standing was as long as his *rukū’*

1.28 Servitude in *al-Sujūd*

The 'abd is subsequently prescribed to say "*Allāh is the Most Great*" and then to fall down in prostration to the floor to let all his limbs individually demonstrate their servitude to Allāh; his forehead placed on the floor before his Lord, his face - the most honorable part of his body - comes together with the dust on the floor, and all the while his heart humbles itself to Allāh. The arrangement of this posture is such that his lower body ends up in a higher level than his upper limbs (i.e. the face), emphasizing his submission. His heart and body are thus rendered humble and submissive before the Greatness and Glory of the Lord. Moreover, when the state of the heart conforms to the state of the body in this position (i.e. both are humble, submissive and down to earth), it is as if the heart too prostrates to Allāh along with the forehead, nose, face, hands, knees and feet. An 'abd with such humility and submissiveness shall be among Allāh's favoured servants. This is because the closest an 'abd comes to his Lord is when he is in the state of prostration.

In this posture, it is prescribed for the 'abd to not have any part of his body depend on any other part for support; that is, he should avoid placing the weight of his thighs on his legs, maintain a space between his belly and his legs, and keep a space between his arms by spreading them to the sides away from his body. This is so that each part of his physical self can individually demonstrate its slavery to Allāh. And it follows from what has been said that the slave (of Allāh) should in this posture be at the closest point to his Lord, as the Prophet (ﷺ) said: "The closest an 'abd is to his Lord is when he is prostrating."¹⁶

¹⁶ Muslim #482 on the authority of Abū Hurayrah.

The reality of the prostration of the heart is its submission to Allāh, and the heart is able to remain in prostration until the Day of Judgment. One of the righteous Salaf was asked: “Does the heart prostrate?” He answered: Indeed it does, by Allāh it prostrates such that it does not raise its head even once, and remains in prostration until it meets Allāh, Exalted be He.¹⁷

1.29 The *Salāh* is built upon five pillars

This points to the worship, humility and submissiveness of the heart to its Lord as a perpetual condition wherever it may be: in constant regard (for Allāh), whether in solitude or in the company of others.

As *salāh* is built upon five pillars; recitation (*qirā'a*), standing (*qiyām*), bowing down (*rukū'*), prostration (*sujūd*) and remembrance of Allāh (*dhikr*), it is tacitly called after these actions i.e. it is called *qiyam* based on the *ayāh*:

﴿فَإِذَا لَمْ يَأْتِ الظَّهَرُ﴾

“Arise [to pray] the night, except for a little”
[*al-Muzammil* (73): 2]

and

﴿وَقُومُوا لِلَّهِ قَدِينِينَ﴾

“stand before Allāh, devoutly obedient..”
[*al-Baqarah* (2): 238],

and it is called *qirā'a* based on the *ayāh*:

¹⁷ Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah attributed this statement to Sahl Ibn 'Abdullāh al-Tustarī. See *Majmū' al-Fatāwa*, [21/287] and [23/138].

وَقُرْءَانَ الْفَجْرِ إِنَّ فُرْقَةً إِنَّ فُرْقَةً كَانَ مَشْهُودًا

“and [also] the Qur’ān [i.e., recitation] of dawn. Indeed, the recitation of dawn is ever witnessed.”

[*al-Isrā’* (17): 78]

and

فَاقْرُءُوا مَا يَسِّرَ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ

“so recite what is easy [for you] of the Qur’ān.”

[*al-Muzzammil* (73): 20],

and it is called *Rukū’* based on the *ayāh*:

وَأَذْكُرُوا مَعَ الرَّكْعَيْنِ

“and bow with those who bow [in worship and obedience].”

[*al-Baqarah* (2): 43]

and

وَلَا أَذْكُرْلَهُمْ أَذْكُرُوا لَا يَرْكُونَ

“And when it is said to them, ‘Bow [in prayer],’ they do not bow.”

[*al-Mursalāt* (77): 48],

and it is called *Sujūd* based on the *ayāh*,

فَسَيِّدُنَا مُحَمَّدُ رَبُّكَ وَكُنْ مِنَ السَّتِّيْدِينَ

“So glorify the praises of thy Lord, and be of those who make prostration (unto Him).”

[*al-Hijr* (15):98]

and

﴿١١﴾ وَسُجُّدٌ وَاقْرَبْ

“But prostrate and draw near [to Allāh].”

[*al-‘Alaq* (96): 19],

and it is called *dhikr* based on the *ayāt*:

يَأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِذَا نُودِيَ لِلصَّلَاةِ مِنْ يَوْمِ الْجُمُعَةِ
فَأْسِعُوا إِلَى ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ

“O you who have believed, when [the *adbān*] is called for the prayer on the day of *Jumu‘ah* [Friday], then proceed to the remembrance of Allāh”

[*al-Jumu‘ah* (62): 9]

and

يَأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا
لَا تُنْهِمُكُمْ أَنْوَاعُكُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُكُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ

“O you who have believed, let not your wealth and your children divert you from the remembrance of Allāh.”

[*al-Munafiqūn* (63): 9]

The most honourable action in *salāh* is prostration and the most honourable *dhikr* in *salāh* is the recitation of the Qur’ān; the first *Surah* that was revealed to the Prophet (ﷺ) was *Surah al-‘Alaq*, whose first *ayah* is to,

﴿١﴾ أَقْرَأْ يَا سَيِّدَكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ

“Recite in the name of your Lord who created.”

[*al-'Alaq* (96): 1]

and whose last *ayah* is to,

وَسُجْدَةٌ وَاقْرَبَةٌ

“But prostrate and draw near [to Allāh].”

[*al-'Alaq* (96): 19]

Thus, the structure of the unit (*rak'ah*) in *salāh* is composed accordingly; it starts with recitation and ends in prostration.

1.30 The State of the 'abd between the Two Prostrations

Next it is prescribed for the 'abd (of Allāh) to rise from his prostration to assume the sitting pose until his limbs enter a state of repose. Given that this pillar has been placed in the middle of two prostrations earns it great significance. The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ used to spend about the same amount of time in this pillar as he did during prostration, and during it he used to invoke and beseech Allāh for His Forgiveness, Mercy, Guidance and Provision. The experience and effect of this pillar is unique and different from the pillar of prostration: in this posture the slave kneels down before his Lord apologising for all the sins he committed and hoping for His Forgiveness and Mercy, and asking Him to help him against his own self that incites him to commit acts of wrongdoing.

1.31 *al-Istigfār between the Two Prostrations*

The Prophet (ﷺ) used to ask for much forgiveness from Allāh in this position. He used to say:

«رَبُّ اغْفِرْ لِي رَبُّ اغْفِرْ لِي رَبُّ اغْفِرْ لِي»

“O my Lord, forgive me, O my Lord, forgive me, O my Lord, forgive me.”¹⁸

O worshipper, be in the *salāh* like a man who agreed to guarantee the debt of a person who turned out to be deceitful and kept delaying the payment of his debt. And because you are the guarantor of this man you will be called to pay the debt in place of him, so you call for every form of available help to force this man to pay his debt in order to release yourself from this commitment.¹⁹

The heart is in partnership with the *nafs* (inner self) in evil and good, punishment and reward, praise and condemnation. Indeed, the *nafs* is intrinsically rebellious in nature, always seeking to break out of its condition of slavery to Allāh and inclined to ignore the rights of Allāh as well as the rights of mankind. Nevertheless, the heart follows and submits to the *nafs* whenever it is dominant and strong, and conversely the *nafs* follows and submits to the heart whenever the latter is dominant and strong.

¹⁸ Ibn Mājah, #897.

¹⁹ This example intends to say that a man should employ all his limbs and every possible means whereby he assures his *salāh* is complete and perfect.

1.32 The Wisdom behind the Second Prostration

It is therefore prescribed for the '*abd*' to sit down in the presence of Allāh with humility, admitting his mistakes and repenting from sins, hoping for His Mercy and asking for His Forgiveness, Guidance, Provision and Protection.²⁰ These five things that the '*abd*' beseeches His Lord for include the good of this life as well as the good of the Hereafter. This is because the '*abd*' (of Allāh) is in dire need of protecting himself against all harm, as well as attaining what benefits him in this life and the Hereafter. His share of Allāh's provision covers the provision intended for his body, heart and soul, and Allāh is the best Provider. Protection and safety keep away the harm, guidance brings forth the benefits of the hereafter, forgiveness protects him from harm both in this life and the Hereafter. Mercy covers all the aforementioned and guidance covers its details.

Then it is prescribed for the '*abd*' to fall in prostration once more, because one prostration is not enough as the case was with bowing down. This is due to the virtue and honour of prostration, not to mention it being the position in which the '*abd*' is closest to his Lord. It also takes into account that prostration is more prominently recognized as a mark of servitude compared to the other actions of *salāh*. Thus it is the culmination of the *rak'ah* in relation to which the preceding actions serve as a preamble that lead up to it. From this point of view it is like the *tawāf* of *ziyarah* (the *tawāf* of visit): just as how the closest an '*abd*' comes to his Lord in *hajj* is during *tawāf*, likewise the closest an '*abd*' comes to his Lord in *salāh* is in prostration. It is reported that the man who asked for the hand of 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar's (*radiy Allāhu 'anhuma*) daughter

²⁰ Abū Dāwūd, #850.

called out to him while he was circulating around the Ka'bah but 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar (*radīy Allāhu 'anhu*) ignored him and did not reply to him. After he finished his *tawāf*, he approached him and said to him: 'How can it be that you think of a matter related to this worldly life when we are standing in the Sight of Allāh in *tawāf*?' It would appear that the reason Allāh made the action of bowing down to precede prostration is that the slave should move gradually from one act to another that is higher than the preceding one in rank.

The wisdom behind prescribing the actions and the statements of *salāh* to be performed several times in succession during *salāh* is because they are the sustenance of the heart and the soul without which they cannot survive. It is like the example of man whose hunger and thirst cannot be quelled by a single morsel of food or a single sip of drink, unless he eats or drinks more and more until he reaches the point of satiation. Eating one bite can never satisfy the hunger of a person; in fact, it may make him even hungrier. One of the righteous Salaf said: 'The example of the man who prays without achieving calmness and tranquility in his *salāh* is like a person who is hungry, but when food is served he takes only one or two handfuls! What then will it do for him!?'

Performing each pillar and reciting each statement multiple times intensifies the perception of servitude and nearness to Allāh, as performing them a second time is an expression of one's gratitude to Allāh for guiding him to do these acts the first time round. Furthermore, it leads to a cumulative increase in the *īmān*, goodness, knowledge and attentiveness of the heart and the feeling of ease in the breast, not to mention aiding the *'abd* in getting rid of the traces of dirt from the heart just like a garment is washed over and over until it becomes clean. It is fascinating wisdom that as-

tounds the mind and points to His Perfection, Mercy and Compassion. And it may be asserted that all we have mentioned above (of the virtues of *salāh*) is just a little bit in comparison to the vast knowledge we are unaware of, which is greater and superior.

1.33 Servitude in *al-Tashabhud* and the meaning of *al-Tabiyyāt*

As the slave is about to conclude his *salāh*, it is prescribed for him to sit down before his Lord, to glorify Him and praise Him with all that befits Him; hence it is dictated for him to proclaim greetings (*al-Tabiyyāt*) which befit Allāh alone. It is the custom of kings to have people greeting them with different types of greetings, be it in words or actions, as a token of their deference and humility to them. You would find some people praise them by words, some would prostrate to them, some would compliment them, some would supplicate for their kingship to abide forever, and some people would do all the aforementioned; they prostrate to the king, then extol his praises, and then supplicate that his kingship last forever. However, as Allāh is the true King whose Face is the only everlasting while everything else shall come to an end, it befits Him alone to receive the Supreme and Perfect Greetings embodied by *al-Tabiyyāt*. And it is for this reason that some scholars interpreted *al-Tabiyyāt* to refer to His reign while other scholars interpreted it to affirm His everlasting kingship. The reality is as I have mentioned, it is an all-encompassing greeting that embraces all these aspects: His Reign, Ownership and Sovereignty. All these Attributes are ascribed to Allāh (in the most perfect sense) and it befits Him even more because every greeting given to any king, be it a prostration or praise or a supplication for their lasting kinship, in fact, belongs to Allāh. That is why the word *al-tabiyyāt* is

prefixed by the definite article (*al*) that semantically indicates that these greetings encompass all greetings. And, the word itself is derived from another word (*hayah*) that means life; thus it affirms the perpetuity of the greeted. This is similar to how they used to say to their kings: '(we hope) you live the life yet to come', or '(we hope) you have an everlasting life', or '(we hope) you live ten thousand years' and so forth. These are the roots of their statements (that we hear to this day): 'I ask Allāh to never cease your days and I ask Allāh to lengthen your life', and so on and so forth... all these are used to mean continuation and prolongation of one's life or kingship. For this reason, all such expressions should be used for Allāh alone because He is the All-Living, Self-Subsisting and Everlasting One.

Next in these supreme greetings comes the word *al-salawāt*, which affirms the exclusivity of *salāh* to Allāh alone. It is for this reason, the word is used in a plural format and structured with the definite article (*al*) to assert that anything that can be called *salāh*, be it exclusive or general, is for Allāh alone and befits none except Him.

1.34 The wisdom behind interlinking *al-Tabiyyāt* and *al-Salawāt*

The wisdom behind interlinking these two words *al-Tabiyyāt* and *al-Salawāt* is that *al-Tabiyyāt* belong to Allāh alone as He has ownership of us and *al-Salawāt* belong to Him as we are His slaves, and both of these are entitlements exclusive to Him; greetings are given to Him alone and prayers are intended for Him alone. Then the adjective word *al-Tayibāt* (the good and pure) is used to qualify His Attributes and His Kingship. It conveys the meaning that He is Good, and so is His Speech, Actions and everything that comes

from Him and attributed to Him or associated with His Names. That is to say, His Essence, His actions, His words, and all that He attributed or associated to Himself such as: His house²¹, His servant²², His spirit²³, His camel²⁴ etc. are all good.

The meanings of all goodly statements *al-Kalima al-Tayyib* are His too as they encompass extolling, praising, glorifying and exalting Him with His Attributes and for His Graces such as saying:

«سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ وَبِحَمْدِكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ، وَتَعَالَىٰ
جَدُّكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا كُنْتُكَ».

“You are glorified O Allāh and praised! Your Name is Blessed; Your Majesty is Exalted and none has the right to be worshipped save You”²⁵

and

«سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ، وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ»

“Glorified is Allāh and Praise and thanks be to Allāh, and There is none worthy of worship save You and Allāh is the Greatest.”²⁶

²¹ Muslim, #2909.

²² *al-Kaft* (18): 1.

²³ *Maryam* (19): 17.

²⁴ *al-Shams* (91): 13.

²⁵ *Subḥānaka Allāhūmma wa bishamadika, wa tabārakasmuka, wa ta'ālā jadduka, wa lā ilāha ghayruk.*

²⁶ *Subḥān Allāh, Alhamdulillāh, Lā ilāha illa Allāh, Allāhu Akbar.*

and

«لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ وَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ، وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ»

“There is none worthy of worship save You, Allāh is the Greatest, Glorified is Allāh and Praise and thanks be to Allāh.”²⁷

and other similar expressions. All good emanates from Him and to Him it belongs; He is Good and accepts nothing but good. He is the Lord and the *Ilāh* of the good; and those who will neighbor Him in the house of honour (i.e. Paradise) are the good ones.

1.35 The Noblest words after the Qur'ān

You ought to contemplate the best words and expressions that are second only to the Qur'ān, such as

«سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَبِحَمْدِهِ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ الْعَظِيمِ»

“Glory be to Allāh, and to Him is all Praise, Glory be to Allāh, the Most Perfect [and all Greatness is for Him].”²⁸

and

«لَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ»

“There is no power or might except in Allāh”²⁹

²⁷ *Subhān Allāh wa bi Ḥamdihi, Subhān Allāhi al-‘Aẓīm,*

²⁸ *La ilāha illa Allāh, Allāhu Akbar, Subhān Allāh, Alhamdulillāh*

²⁹ *Lā Hawla wa lā Quwwata illa Billāh.*

It is only then that you will realise that such words cannot be used to address anyone besides Allāh.

This is because “*Subḥān Allāh*” denotes that Allāh is far above any defect or shortcoming, and that His Attributes are far beyond those of His creation. As for “*Alḥamdu lillāh*”, it testifies to the ultimate Perfection of His Words, Actions and Attributes. The words “*Lā ilāha illAllāh*” affirm that He is the only Lord and *Ilāh* worthy of worship and and everything else that is worshipped besides Allāh is falsehood, He is the only true *Ilāh*; anyone who takes an *Ilāh* other than Him will be like a man who takes the (weak and fragile) house of spiders as his house, to which he retreats in hope of protecting himself from heat and cold, which surely shall not benefit him in the least. The words “*Allāhu Akbar*” affirm that He is Greater, more supreme, prouder, more powerful and more knowledgeable than anyone or anything other than Him. This is why neither these words nor their underlying meanings are appropriate to use in reference to anyone or anything other Allāh.

1.36 Servitude in *al-Taslim*

After greeting Allāh, it is then prescribed for the ‘abd to send greetings upon all the righteous slaves of Allāh - the persons whom Allāh has favoured and chosen. This part of the greeting is positioned right after the greetings and praise of Allāh, in conformation to the order mentioned in the *ayah*,

قُلْ لِلّٰهِ وَسَلَّمُ عَلٰى عِبَادِهِ الَّذِينَ أَصْطَفَيْتَ

“Say [O Muhammad (ﷺ)]: ‘Praise be to Allāh, and peace be upon His servants whom He has chosen.’”

[*al-Naml* (27): 59]

Not to mention that since it is a greeting intended for the created, (therefore as a matter of etiquette) it should not precede the greetings addressed to the Creator.

Within the greeting intended for His righteous slaves, Allāh has prescribed that they be addressed in order of the ranks of the recipients, so that the first to be greeted is the one who deserves it the most: the Messenger of Allāh, Muḥammad (ﷺ), whose nation received every form of good only through him. The second person to be greeted is the slave himself, followed by the rest of the pious slaves of Allāh, the best among whom are the Prophets and Angels followed by the Companions of the Prophet and then the followers of all Prophets, and all the righteous slaves occupying the heavens and the earth. At the end, it is prescribed for him to send salutations of peace upon all those who deserve to be greeted, in particular and in general.

1.37 The Meaning of the two Shahadahs in *al-Tahjīyyāt*

Then it is prescribed for the 'abd to bear witness and declare the testimony of truth upon which the *salāh* is built, as well as one of its rights upon him; that is to say, if he does not testify it, the *salāh* will be of no benefit to him. This is to testify that Allāh revealed to His Messenger the Message (i.e. Islām). With this testimony, the *salāh* is finished, as per the statement of 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd (*radiy Allāhu 'anhu*): "After you say it (i.e. the two testimonies), your *salāh* will have been finished; you have the choice then to either get up or remain sitting down."³⁰

However, this word (i.e. finish) can be interpreted linguistically

³⁰ Abū Dāwūd #970.

to mean that the *salāh* finishes after the testimony has been said, as understood by the people of Kufa, or to mean that the *salāh* is about to finish, as understood by the people of Hijaz. In both cases, the testimony of truth³¹ is positioned at the end of the *salāh* similar to how it is prescribed to be the seal of *wuḍū'* and of life (i.e. it is prescribed to be pronounced at the end of *wuḍū'*³² and at the end of one's life too). The Prophet (ﷺ) said: "Whosever's last words before he dies were that there is no *Ilāh* worthy of worship except Allāh, will enter Paradise."³³

After having concluded the *salāh*, the 'abd is permitted to ask Allāh for anything he wants.

1.38 Sending *al-Salāt* upon the Prophet (ﷺ)

It is prescribed for him to intercede by sending *salāh* upon the Prophet (ﷺ) before he starts beseeching Allāh for his needs, because sending *salāh* upon the Prophet (ﷺ) is one of the most important intercessory means to be utilised before invoking Allāh. It is reported in the *Sunan* books of hadith that Fuḍālah ibn 'Ubayd (*raḍiyy Allāhu 'anhu*) narrated that the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said: "If any one of you prays, he should commence by glorifying his Lord and praising Him; he should invoke peace and blessings on the Prophet (ﷺ) and thereafter he should supplicate to Allāh for

³¹ I bear the witness that there is no *Ilāh* worthy of worship except Allāh and that Muhammad is His Messenger.

³² Muslim #234.

³³ Abū Dāwūd #3116.

anything he wishes.”³⁴

This supplication comes at the end of the *salāh* after the greetings and the *salāh* upon the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ); thereafter the ‘abd has the choice and freedom to ask Allāh for what he wants.

1.39 The Sunnah of the *Adhān*

This is similar to what has been prescribed for the ‘abd to do upon hearing the *adhān*:

- 1) To repeat the phrases uttered during the *adhān*
- 2) To say at its conclusion: I am content and pleased that Allāh is my Lord, Islām is my religion, and Muḥammad is the Messenger
- 3) To ask Allāh to grant the Prophet (ﷺ) the right of intercession and ascendancy and to grant him (on the Day of Judgment) the best and the highest place in Paradise which You promised him
- 4) Then to send *salāh* upon him
- 5) And finally to ask Allāh for his needs

The prescribed five acts mentioned above should never be overlooked.

³⁴ Abū Dāwūd, #1476; Tirmidhī #3476; Nasā’i, vol. 3, pg. 44; Ahmād #23937. Tirmidhī said it was ḥasan ṣahīh, al-Ḥākim #840 said it was ṣahīh with Dhahabī agreeing, as did ibn Khuzaymāh #709 and al-Albānī, *Saḥīḥ Abū Dāwūd* #1314.

The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) heard a man supplicating in prayer. He did not glorify Allāh and neither did he invoke blessings on the Prophet (ﷺ). The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said, “He made haste.” He then called him and said to him or to those around him, “If any one of you prays, he should commence by glorifying his Lord and praising Him; he should invoke peace and blessings on the Prophet (ﷺ) and thereafter he should supplicate to Allāh for anything he wishes.”

CHAPTER TWO

The Secret of *Salāh* lies in devotion to Allāh

The secret and the essence of *salāh* is to devote oneself to Allāh while praying -just as the slave should not turn his face away from the direction of the *qiblah*, he should also disallow his heart from giving attention to anything except his Lord. Therefore the '*abd*' should let the Ka'bah - the House of Allāh - be the direction of his body and face, and let Allāh be the direction of his heart and soul. Allāh shall give His attention to His '*abd*' in proportion to the level of his devotion and focus in *salāh*. Thus, if he turns away from Allāh (by becoming unmindful), He too shall turn away from him - truly, as you judge, shall you yourself be judged.

2.1 Devotion to Allāh in *salāh* is of three levels

Devotion in *salāh* is of three levels:

- 1) Devotion of the heart: This level safeguards the heart and rectifies its affairs from the sickness of desires and the whispers of Satan, as well as all thoughts that may nullify his *salāh* or lessen its reward.
- 2) Devotion of *ibṣār*: This level is when the '*abd*' is mindful of Allāh in his *salāh* to the degree that he becomes as if he worships Him while seeing Him.
- 3) Devotion of understanding: This level is reached when the

slave reflects upon and comprehends the meanings of the words of Allāh (i.e. Qur’ān) that he recites. And, when he contemplates the details of the worship (i.e. *salāh*) in order to pay its due right in humility and tranquility.

If the slave successfully reaches these three levels, he will have truly established and performed his *salāh* in the most perfect manner and in return, he will receive the full attention of Allāh.

2.2 Devotion in *Salāh*

The devotion of standing upright before Allāh in *salāh* comes into effect when the slave devotes his attention to the Greatness of Allāh and His Attribute of Self-subsistence, as this will ensure that he turns neither his face nor his eyes from side to side.

The devotion of the statement “*Allāh is the Greatest*” by which the slave commences the *salāh*³⁵ is realised when the slave devotes his attention and focus to His Pride, Glory and Exaltation.

The devotion of the opening supplication³⁶ happens when the servant extols and glorifies and praises Him profusely, ascribing to Him all that befits Him and declares His transcendence above everything that does not befit Him, and praises Him for His Attributes and Perfection.

The devotion of taking refuge in Allāh from the accursed Satan is realised by having confidence and faith that Allāh shall support him, protect him and aid him against Satan.

³⁵ *Takbīrat al-Ihrām* [The opening *takbīr*].

³⁶ *Du‘ā al-Istiftāh* [The Opening Supplication].

The devotion of reciting the Qur'ān lies in the slave's endeavour to learn about Allāh through His Words as if trying to see Him through His revelation. One of the righteous Salaf said: "Allāh manifests Himself to His slaves through His Speech (i.e. Qur'ān)." It is, however, the case that the degree of devotion while reciting and praying varies from one person to another, and the difference between them is like the difference between the one whose both eyes are sound and unimpaired, and the one-eyed individual, the blind person, the deaf person, etc. in their levels of perception. The 'abd should be as heedful as possible to His Essence, Attributes, Actions, Commandments, Laws and Names.

The devotion of bowing down is contained in being mindful to the Greatness and the Pride of Allāh, Exalted be He. For that reason it is prescribed for him to say while he is in the state of bowing down,

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ رَاجِحٌ لِي مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَيْكَ

"Glory to my Lord, the Most High."³⁷

After he rises up from his bowing stance, he should focus his attention upon glorifying and praising Allāh repeatedly, so as to manifest his servitude to Him, the One in whose Hand is the sole authority to bestow and deny.

When the servant falls into prostration, he ought to focus his attention on feeling his nearness to Him, overwhelmed in humility in the hope that He forgives him, guides him, sustains him, protects him and bestows His mercy upon him. Then, when he raises his head and adopts the sitting posture, his inner condition

³⁷ *Subbāna Rabbīya'l 'Aṣim*

Abū Dāwūd, Ibn Mājah, al-Nasā'i, Tirmidhī and Ahmād

takes on a different nature, one that is similar to the condition of the pilgrim when he performs the last circumambulation³⁸ because at that point, his heart begins to realise that he is about to complete his prayer and with it leave this blessed condition that he is experiencing, and that soon he will be returning to the dreariness of his worldly affairs that he had detached himself from just before standing before his Lord. Once again he will be subject to the feelings of pain and anguish that his heart endured before he started praying, all of which melted away as soon as he commenced his *salāh*. At that point, his heart rushes to enjoy the nearness of Allāh for the last time, to bask in His grace, and to be saved from the disruptiveness of his worldly affairs.

The feeling of bitterness he endures is due to his recognition that all this lasts only as long as he is praying. At this stage, the heart cannot but feel burdened and troubled knowing that all this is about to end and that he is about to return to these worldly affairs and concerns. This agitates the 'abd to the point that he starts wishing that this *salāh* were the final act of his life. Not to mention the slave's awareness that as soon as he finishes praying he will resume communicating with those who bring him nothing but concerns, worries and harm after he had been invoking and supplicating his Lord. However, this kind of feeling cannot be experienced except by those whose hearts are alive with the remembrance and love of Allāh and who are cognisant of the negative effect that mankind leaves on their hearts. This is because interacting with people puts him in the way of harm and worries, agitates his heart and makes him overlook or miss good deeds, not to mention causing him to commit more sins. More importantly, it distracts him from invoking Allāh, the most High.

³⁸ *Tawāf al-Waddā'a*

2.3 Discussion on *Taslīm*

The 'abd (of Allāh) is either exposed to:

- 1) The universally decreed Judgment of Allāh pertaining to his inward and outward conditions, which necessitates him to act in accordance with his state of servitude and slavery to Allāh, since each judgment is associated with a special condition of servitude to Allāh.
- 2) The actions that the 'abd performs out of his servitude to Allāh and these necessitate the judgments that ensue from the prescribed religious commandments.

Each of these aspects necessitate that the 'abd (of Allāh) submits himself to Allāh, Exalted be He. In fact, this is the reason for naming him a Muslim, with reference to Islām - which is derived from the word *taslīm*, which means submission. As the slave submits to the divine law of his Lord as well as His universally decreed Judgment by demonstrating his servitude to Him and abstaining from following his own desires and sins, he will be as if he's saying: I am destined to bear the title of Islām deservedly.

2.4 Exposition on the fruits *al-Khushū'*

After his heart has been filled with tranquility through the remembrance of Allāh, recitation of His Words, expressing his love for Him as well as demonstrating his servitude to Him, he leans towards his Lord and draws closer to Him to find peace, receiving safety and peace through his *īmān* and experiencing happiness through his *ībṣān*. It is for this reason that, abiding by these two ideals is of utmost necessity, failing this he shall neither enjoy life, success nor happiness. However, because the slave has been tried with an innate nature that entices him to commit sins, base

desires that serve the callings of his innate nature, not to mention the seductive whispers of Satan, all of which aim to waste his share of his reward or, at the very least, decrease his share of the reward, the wisdom of Allāh, the Most Merciful and the Mighty, has decreed for him the *salāh*, to compensate him for the missed reward and to revive his willpower and rectify his *īmān*. The Mercy and Wisdom of Allāh manifest themselves again when He, Exalted be He, Decreed a period of time to pass between five prayers so that the slave can regain his composure and blot out the sins he earned in between.

Furthermore, He made the actions of *salāh* such that they symbolise his submission, surrender and humility to Allāh; thus He made for each body limb a duty to perform what demonstrates its servitude to Allāh. He also made the spirit of *salāh* and the means to reap its fruits that the slave give his full attention and complete devotion to Allāh. And he made its reward and place be when he enters upon Allāh (i.e. commences *salāh*) and He ordered his 'abd to adorn himself before commencing the *salāh* as a reminder for him of the Day of Judgment when he shall be screened for questioning.

2.5 The fruit of *salāh* is true devotion to Allāh

The fruit of fasting is the purification of the soul. The fruit of *zakāh* (obligatory alms) is the purification of wealth. The fruit of *hajj* (pilgrimage) is forgiveness. The fruit of *jihād* (fighting in submitting the soul) that Allāh bartered from His servants in exchange for Paradise. The fruit of *salāh* is the attention of the 'abd upon his Lord and the attention of Allāh given to His 'abd. However embarking towards Allāh with complete devotion in *salāh* encompasses all the aforementioned fruits because the fruits of all good

deeds are found when the *'abd* embarks towards Allāh with true devotion.

This explains why the Prophet (ﷺ) never said, my comfort lies in fasting, or *bajj*, or *al-'umrah* or any other good deed but rather he said: “my comfort has been made in the *salāh*.³⁹ It is also worthwhile to pay attention to the Prophet’s choice of words in this statement. He said “my comfort is made in *salāh*” and did not say “my comfort is made with *salāh*” because the former means that comfort is achieved only after commencing the *salāh*, while the latter implies that such comfort is received even when not praying. This is why when he sought the comfort of his heart he would say: “O Bilāl, call for *salāh*: give us comfort by it”⁴⁰

2.6 Why *salāh* gives us comfort?

Meaning, call for the prayer so that we can pray and relieve ourselves from the hardships of this life, just as how a tired person finds repose as soon as he arrives at his house and settles down in it, breaking away from the hardships and the fatigue he endured outside.

You ought to pause and reflect again upon his choice of words that reveal another subtlety; the Prophet (ﷺ) did not say, let us relieve ourselves from the burden of duty (i.e. *salāh*), which is the attitude of those who pray just to release themselves from the obligation of praying, who feel hassled every time they have to pray - and when they pray they cannot wait to finish it because the source of their comfort is found outside the *salāh*, since their hearts

³⁹ al-Nasā'i #3939.

⁴⁰ Abū Dāwūd #4985.

are filled with everything except Allāh. Thus, praying merely keeps them from indulging in this worldly life that they love so much. They are easily observed from their manner of performing prayer; they pray in a rush and lack tranquility and calmness. The only thing that compels them to pray in the first place is that they know it is a must (obligation). However, their *salāh* is deficient; they utter with their tongues that which does not conform to what is in their hearts. All the while, the voice of their heart echos, let's get this *salāh* over with! Therefore the difference between a person whose comfort is found in the *salāh* and a person whose comfort is found outside the *salāh* is obvious and self-evident. The former finds *salāh* to be a grace upon his heart through which he experiences tranquility, calmness and pleasure, whereas the latter finds *salāh* akin to heavy chains shackling his limbs and a gloomy cell imprisoning his heart.

Truly, those whose comfort is not found in *salāh* feel as if praying was a prison for their soul and chains confining their limbs from committing sins. Despite that, the *salāh* of this type of people might be a means whereby their sins are forgiven and they receive a share of Allāh's Mercy depending on how much servitude to Allāh they manage to demonstrate while praying. But on the other hand, it is also possible they might be punished for the deficiency in their *salāh*. As for those whose comfort is to be found in *salāh*, for them praying is the garden in which they find comfort, pleasure, tranquility, and the grace of their hearts and souls. It brings them nearer to Allāh and elevates their rank, so that they only have a reward similar to those that preceded, but they also enjoy a special rank that none ever had, by being brought near to Allāh, in addition to the mere reward they receive for the performance of their *salāh*.

2.7 From the benefits of *Salāh* is nearness to Allāh

It is customary for kings to promise reward and nearness to those whom they are pleased with. The magicians said to pharaoh,

﴿إِنَّنَا لَأَجْرَاءِنَّ كُلَّا نَحْنُ الْغَلِيلُ﴾

“Is there indeed for us a reward if we are the predominant?”

[*al-Shu‘ara’* (26): 41]

and he answered that they would be rewarded and be among those near to him, saying

﴿قَالَ نَعَمْ وَإِنَّكُمْ لَمِنَ الْمُقْرَبِينَ﴾

“Yes, and, [moreover], you will be among those made near [to me].”

[*al-Ar‘af* (7): 114]

The example of the first type is like a man who entered the abode of the king but was unable to gain entrance to him as there was a barrier standing between him and the king, hence he was unable to see him or gain access to this person. The barrier is an embodiment of his desires and lusts as well as the smoke screen of his hopeful wishes in this life; his heart is sick and his self is wrapped up in what it desires wanting only its immediate share in this life. It is for these reasons that all the while they pray they are in an unhappy state wherein they are not only unable to obtain any comfort, but are also empty of feelings of fear and hope in Allāh, which makes prayer a suffering for them that only ceases when they finish praying, as only then are they able to return to that in which they find their comfort (i.e. worldly affairs and pleasures).

The example of the second type is like a man who entered the house of the king upon which the barrier screening him from the king is removed; thus he is able to find delight in looking at the king and being at his service and in his obedience. In return, the king lavishes upon him every form of grace and brings him near to himself. For all these reasons, he is unable to bear leaving the house and wishes to remain standing before him to enjoy the sweetness of being close to him, the tranquility that he experiences from it, and being held in esteem by Allāh while he basks in His good Words (i.e. Qur’ān). He also enjoys being in such a state of humbleness and humility before Him, for which he invokes Him more and more while he is being showered with His graces from every direction, not to mention the calmness that his soul experiences while his heart and limbs are fully attentive to his Lord. He is pleased and comfortable, worshipping Allāh as if he sees Him, for He manifests Himself to him through His Words (i.e. Qur’ān). It should thus come as no surprise that the most distressing thing for him is to have to leave all that (i.e. conclude the *salāh*). And Allāh is the Guide and the Helper.

The aforementioned are just some brief glimpses and hints about *salāh* and a disclosure of some of its subtle qualities and hidden gems.

CHAPTER THREE

Distinction between the people of *al-Samā'* and the people of *Salāh*

I call upon the people (*al-Samā'*) who indulge themselves in listening (to music and songs) and I ask them by Allāh, the One and only truthful *Ilāh* worthy of worship, to tell me if the experience and enjoyment they attain from listening to songs could ever be equal to, or even vaguely similar to, such feelings and state of heart! Moreover, I ask them, by Allāh, to tell me whether their indulgence in songs would allow them at all to experience these sublime emotions and state of heart when they pray? In fact, I would like to know if they have ever even detected from afar the fragrance of such sublime emotions and experiences!

I will take the liberty of answering these questions on their behalf, and I swear by Allāh that the experience and enjoyment attained from praying is incongruous with, and bears not an iota of resemblance to the experience and enjoyment they attain from listening to songs.(I fear that I might end up writing a long chapter, otherwise I would have mentioned some of what they experience when listening to songs, in order to explain the nature of this type of listening.)

A person whose heart has life in it and who enjoys even a mini-

mal level of understanding shall realise the difference between the experience and enjoyment attained from reciting the Words of Allāh (i.e. Qur'ān) and the experience and enjoyment attained from singing lyrics. And he shall recognise the difference between the experience and enjoyment attained from standing before Allāh, the Lord of all the worlds (in *salāh*) and the experience and enjoyment attained from standing before singers (and musicians). He will also understand the difference between the experience and enjoyment attained from comprehending the meanings of the Words of Allāh and the experience and enjoyment they attain from singing and enrapturement, which is the spell of fornication and the Qur'ān of Satan. By Allāh, whenever the love of both tastes (i.e. Qur'ān and songs) enters the heart of a person, only one of them can remain in the heart as one of them will expel the other; just as the daughter of the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) and the daughter of the enemy of Allāh cannot ever be married at the same time to one man.⁴¹ And Allāh, Exalted be He, Knows best.

⁴¹ He quotes a part of a ḥadīth in which the Prophet (ﷺ) disliked 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib to marry the daughter of Abū Jahl.

Bukhāri #2943 and Muslim #2449. This part is used as a metaphor to mean that the words of Allāh and the words of Satan cannot gather in one place.

CHAPTER FOUR

It is only when the hearts that have deviated far from the guidance of the Prophet (ﷺ) and have abandoned what he, his Companions and the righteous Salaf were upon, become upright that they will regain the discernment through which they can experience the right enjoyment and sensation. The early generations used to find enjoyment in matters pertaining to Allāh, Exalted be He, such as: praying, reciting the Qur’ān, contemplating on the Words of Allāh and listening to them, attending the assemblies of scholars and the gatherings of knowledge, fighting in battles for the sake of Allāh, enjoining the good and forbidding the wrong-doing, loving and despising people for the sake of Allāh, etc. However, the preference of the later generations, except those whom Allāh saved, became distorted and they sought enjoyment in musical instruments, songs, dancing, noise and clamour, while desisting from doing deeds that Allāh loves. Indeed, the experience and enjoyment attained from melodies is nothing like the experience and enjoyment attained from the Qur’ān. The experience and enjoyment attained from musical instruments is nothing like the experience and enjoyment attained from reciting *al-Nūr*⁴² and

⁴² *Surah al-Nūr* (24)

*al-Mu'minūn*⁴³. The experience and enjoyment attained from tunes is nothing like the experience and enjoyment attained from the *al-Zumar*⁴⁴, and the experience and enjoyment obtained from flutes is nothing like the experience and enjoyment attained from the *ayah*,

﴿أَفَتَرَبَتِ الْسَّاعَةُ وَأَشْقَقَ الْقَمَرُ﴾

“The Hour has come near, and the moon has split [in two].”

[*al-Qamar* (54): 1]

The experience and enjoyment attained from woodwinds is definitely nothing like the experience and enjoyment attained from the *Yāsīn*⁴⁵ and *al-Saffāt*⁴⁶. The experience and enjoyment attained from saying poetry is nothing like the experience and enjoyment attained from reciting *al-Shu'arā'*⁴⁷. The experience and enjoyment of whistlers and hand-clappers is nothing like the experience and enjoyment of *al-Anbiyā'*. The experience and enjoyment attained from listening to songs and poetry describing the beauty of the eyes of women, their hips and bodies is nothing like the experience and enjoyment gained from listening to the *Yūnus*⁴⁸ and *Hūd*⁴⁹.

⁴³ *Surah al-Mu'minūn* (23)

⁴⁴ *Surah al-Zumar* (39)

⁴⁵ *Surah Yāsīn* (36)

⁴⁶ *Surah al-Saffāt* (37)

⁴⁷ *Surah al-Shu'arā'* (26)

⁴⁸ *Surah Yūnus* (10)

⁴⁹ *Surah Hūd* (11)

The experience and enjoyment of those who stand on their feet serving Satan is in nothing at all like the experience and enjoyment of those who stand on their feet serving the most Merciful while reciting *al-An'ām*⁵⁰ and *al-Ar'āf*⁵¹. The experience and enjoyment of those in rapture upon being overwhelmed by music is nothing like the experience and enjoyment of the knower (*ārif*) when listening to the Great Qur'ān and, in particular, when listening to *al-Fātīhab*. And, the experience and enjoyment of those who jostle in Satan's barn to listen to music is nothing like the experience and enjoyment of those who crowd before the Most Merciful.

Exalted is Allāh for differentiating those bestowed with divine sublime emotions from those with earthly elation, in order to distinguish between those who are expelled [from Allāh's Mercy] and the [true] servants [of Allāh]. Indeed, He is above all defects and shortcomings; He sustains both types of individuals in this world, but only upon His [true] slaves shall He bestow honour and grace on the Day of Judgment.

By Allāh, the love to hear the Qur'ān of Satan and the love to hear the Words of the most Merciful shall never coexist in one heart, just as how the daughter of the enemy of Allāh and the daughter of the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) cannot be with the same man ever.⁵²

⁵⁰ *Surah al-An'ām* (6)

⁵¹ *Surah al-Ar'āf* (7)

⁵² Refer to footnote no.41 to see the explanation of this metaphor.

He refers to the state when a person listen to poems with the intention to ease his heart or to bring some benefit to his life for the sake of Allāh.

As the poet said:

“You shall die for the one whom you love...
Therefore, find yourself the lover who is most favourable to you.”

4.1 *al-Samā'* of the people of Truth

When the Companions of the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) got together and wanted their hearts to be moved and to feel some ease and comfort to lighten their burden, they would ask one of them to recite the Qur’ān while the rest listened to him with rapt attention. And so, their selves would be overwhelmed with tranquility and their eyes would overflow with tears, and their hearts would taste the sweetness of *īmān*, which is far beyond what those who listen to songs could ever experience.

‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (*radīy Allāhu ‘anhu*) used to say to Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī (*radīy Allāhu ‘anhu*) whenever he was in his company: ‘O Abū Mūsā, remind us of our Lord’ and as soon as he would start reciting Qur’ān, their hearts would be touched and deeply moved. ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān (*radīy Allāhu ‘anhu*) used to say: if our hearts were pure, we would never have enough of the Words of Allāh.

It is true, indeed. How can a person ever be satisfied when it comes to the words of the one whom he loves and with whom his hopes and aspirations lie! How can a person be sufficient when it comes to Qur’ān with which the *salāh* is commenced, not with crass melodies and singing!

As the poet said:

“When we fall ill we seek cure in your remembrance... such that whenever we cease it, we become more sick.”

The people of melodies and songs are segregated from the people of the Qur’ān, as each group lives in a different domain of sphere.

Truly, the condition of the one who is enraptured by listening to songs is nothing compared to the condition of sublime elation and enjoyment that is experienced by the one listening to the Qur’ān while his heart enjoys the sweet taste of *īmān*. He experiences a state of tranquility, ease and amiability and a longing in his heart to meet His Lord, and a readiness to understand the meanings of His Words and to apply what he understands on himself. All this impels him to recite His Words beautifully and perfectly. You find him reciting:

طه ۚ مَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْءَانَ لِتُشْقِرَ ۚ إِلَّا لَذِكْرَةً
 لِمَنِ يَخْشَى ۚ تَرْزِيلًا مِمَّنْ خَلَقَ الْأَرْضَ وَالسَّمَوَاتِ الْعُلَىِ ۚ
 الْرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ أَسْتَوَى ۚ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي
 الْأَرْضِ وَمَا يَبْنُهُمَا وَمَا تَحْتَ الْرَّثَىِ ۚ وَإِنْ تَجْهَرْ بِالْوَقْتِ
 فَإِنَّهُ يَعْلَمُ أَسْرَرَ وَأَخْفَى ۚ

“*Tā-Hā*, We have not sent down to you the Qur’ān that you be distressed. But only as a reminder for those who fear [Allāh] - A revelation from He who created the earth and highest heavens. The Most Merciful [who is] above the Throne established. To Him belongs what is in the heavens and what is on the earth and what is between them and what is under the soil. And if you speak aloud - then indeed, He knows the secret and

4.1 *al-Samā'* of the people of *Truth*

what is [even] more hidden.”

[*Tā-Hā* (20): 1-7]

And other *ayāt* of this theme, whose effect on the heart will be like the effect of communicating with the love of one's life after a long absence - as long as the heart is sincere and is truly alive, and has smelled the fragrance of loving Allāh and has tasted its sweetness. The effect (of reciting or listening to the Qur'ān) upon him is like a drink of cold water after having felt severe thirst in very hot weather, or like land just after life-giving rains have fallen upon it after it had been parched and arid, causing the land to grow every nice variety of plant that stand tall in the land thanking and praising Him.

After all this, it should be clear that in the Sight of Allāh, His Angels, His Messengers and His truthful and sincere servants, the rank of those listening to the Qur'ān and the feeling they experience from it shall never equal the rank (i.e. they shall be far above the rank) of those listening to music and songs and what they experience out of it. This is because the people of music and songs are the servants of their own lustful souls and desires; they listen only to entertain their lustful souls and earn their share of falsehood. And whosoever is unable to distinguish the difference between listening to the Qur'ān and listening to music and songs, and is unable to distinguish between the transcendent experience attained from the Qur'ān and the base experience attained from music, should ask his Lord, sincerely and truthfully, to revive his heart and to grant him a light to illuminate the depths of his ignorance, and to bestow him with the ability to differentiate between the truth and the falsehood. Indeed, He is near and answers the prayers of His servants.

CHAPTER FIVE

Additionally, there is a subtle sensation that only the people habituated to music and songs can perceive and experience after listening to songs and then departing from that environment. The state of elation and rapture that they experienced while listening to music and songs is always followed by a state of their heart feeling troubled, accompanied by feelings of desolation and darkness. However, it is only those whose hearts still retain a minimal level of life who will be able to notice this subtle change, as opposed to those whose hearts are completely dead, because the dead cannot feel the pain of wounds. And if they were ever asked about what provoked these uncomfortable feelings, they would not be able to tell because their hearts are steeped in their corrupt appetites and songs. In fact, not only are they unable to realise the root cause behind the pain they endure, they are also unable to comprehend how they ever came to have such corrupted hearts - although if they weighed what they experience from music and songs in the scales of knowledge, they would be able to grasp the causes and reasons. Nonetheless, I shall communicate the causes of such feelings of abnormality, constriction and desolation to you.

Consider under the best circumstances, listening to poems and songs consists of partaking in a mixture of truth and falsehood - a combination of desires and dubiety. And even in the best case, the condition of the one who engages in listening to songs and poems is that his soul takes it share of what might be deemed commended in religion, except that it has been adulterated by his whims and the whispers of Satan, effectively making what he acquires from his listening to be neither pure nor clean. In other words, the positive and beneficial aspect of listening to songs, that the Most Merciful deems acceptable, will be tainted with the negative and condemned aspect of it that is to Satan's liking. Ultimately, the heart ends up receiving a share of good and a share of evil. And this is the best possible scenario with listening to songs, as it is founded on lustful wishes, desires and Satanic inclinations, although it has a bit of goodness in it. It will be like a small amount of pure water dribbling down the valley of the heart that has encountered a torrent of impure water causing the impure to prevail, or at the very least having the divine inspiration to run alongside the satanic inspiration.

Despite the inability of the heart in which a modicum of sincerity still prevails in recognising the feeling of disquiet caused by listening to music and songs, particularly when the soul is submerged in music and songs and has been taken off-course from pursuing its objective -as soon as the heart awakes from this state of intoxication after having put a distance between itself and the enjoyment obtained from listening to music and songs it endures feelings of distress, isolation and annoyance. The more sincere and truthful the heart is, the more it is able to recognise this effect because the sentience of the heart dictates feeling the negative impact of listening to music and songs even without realising the cause behind these negative feelings.

This situation has many parallels in real life; consider the example of a person, whose attention is focused on his beloved, or who sees something he fears, or is busy indulging in an activity that he enjoys, which overtakes his heart and senses -he will not feel any slap, bites or stings that he (might) receive while in this condition. Yet as soon as he emerges out from this state of focus or pleasure, he starts feeling the pain of the hit or sting as if he had just received it. This is due to him being in a state that prevented him from sensing pain, but when the reason preventing him from feeling pain was removed, he starts to experience the pain.

This is the reason that compelled some of the truthful ones to rush to renew their repentance and seek Allāh's forgiveness as soon as they stopped listening to songs and music, and to look for the means to cure their state of aloofness (from Allāh) and strangeness (that had resulted from their listening to songs and music). This state is perceived and recognised by those with sound reasoning and intellect and whose objective is to perfect their souls and learn the ills and remedies of their hearts - And Allāh is Whom we ask for help.

While it is undeniable that listening to poetry with the right intention might leave a positive and commendable effect on the heart, it would be akin to a person who drinks honey using a dirty cup. The truthful and sincere ones with lofty aspirations find themselves above drinking from a cup they find dirty, as their uprightness, purity and high endeavour makes them balk at the idea, and they only agree to drink in a clean cup, even if it means they have to wait for a long time. On the other hand, some people will drink in any cup they find, even if this cup is made of the bones of dead animals or pigskin or dog skin, or even if the cup is normally

used to consume alcohol from, making the excuse that he is not drinking alcohol in it. Indeed, even crows recoil from drinking from such utensils, even if they are offered the best drink in them.

If the truthful one could isolate this (negative feeling) during his attendance of poetry and singing, he would have realised it, but the sweetness of honey causes him to overlook the dirt and filth of the cup. However, as soon as he concludes his listening, he endures a state of strangeness and constriction in his heart - but this only happens if he is truthful with Allāh and if he listened to songs and poetry (assuming it to be) for the sake of Allāh. As for the liar whose intention in listening is for enjoyment and to fulfill his base desires, he is like a person drinking impure drink from a dirty cup and yet unable to perceive the ill-feelings mentioned above, because Satan and his lustful desires have taken over his heart. On the other hand, the ones whose interest and heart lies in listening to the Qur'ān, he will be drinking a pure, unadulterated drink in the purest and cleanest of cups.

The drinking cups are of three types: pure and clean, impure and dirty and a mixture of both. And drinks are of three types as well: pure, impure and a mixture of the two.

5.1 The Types of Hearts

Hearts are of three kinds:

- 1) Healthy hearts, whose drink is pure and whose drinking cups are clean,
- 2) Sick hearts whose drinks are impure and whose drinking cups are filthy, and
- 3) Hearts that contain elements of both *īmān* and hypocrisy, that drink from both pure and impure cups. Allāh measures everything; the perceptive one is he who looks deeply into causal factors and contemplates their outcomes and objectives.

The one who understands the underlying objectives of religious legislations -in particular the principle of blocking the means that lead to matters the religion prohibits - will certainly declare listening to songs and poetry to be impermissible, especially considering that listening to the singing of a non-*mahrūm* woman, looking at her as well as being in private with her are in themselves unlawful.

The matters that religion prohibits fall into two categories:

- 1) Matters that are prohibited due to the corruption and evil that they involve (in themselves).
- 2) Matters that are made prohibited because they serve as a means to what is deemed evil or corrupted.

That is why a person who only looks into the apparent aspect of whether listening to poetry and singing is allowed or not, without considering what it can lead up to, might find this ruling debatable or hard to fathom. And Allāh, most High, Knows best.

5.1 The Types of Hearts

[To conclude], all praise be to Allāh, the Lord of all worlds, alone, and may the *salāh* and *salam* of Allāh be upon the master of all the Messengers, Muḥammad (ﷺ), and upon his Family, his Companions, and their followers until the Day of Judgment. Indeed, everything is with Your Favour and Help exclusively, for You are the Most Merciful.

APPENDIX I

Ibn al-Qayyim on *Khushū'*

Allāh, Most High, says,

اللَّهُمَّ يَا أَنَّ لِلَّذِينَ أَمْتُو أَنْ تَخْشَعَ قُلُوبُهُمْ لِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ
وَمَا زَلَّ مِنَ الْحَقِّ وَلَا يَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلِ
فَطَالَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَمْدُ فَقَسَطَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ وَكَثُرَ مِنْهُمْ فَنِسِعُوْنَ ١٦

“Has the time not arrived for the hearts of those who have faith to yield to the remembrance of Allāh and to the truth He has sent down, so they are not like those who were given the Book before for whom the time seemed over long so that their hearts became hard? Many of them are deviators.”²

Ibn Mas'ūd (*radiy Allāhu 'anhu*) said, ‘The time between our accepting Islām and being rebuked by this verse was four years.’³

¹ Taken from ‘The Humility of Prayer’, Published by Dār us-Sunnah Publishers 2007, Birmingham, UK.

² *al-Hadīd* (57): 16

³ Muslim #3027

Ibn ‘Abbās said, ‘Allāh granted time and leeway to the hearts of the believers, then, at the turn of the thirteenth year after the revelation had started, He rebuked them.⁴

Allāh, Most High, says,

فَدَأْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١﴾ الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَشُونَ

“It is the believers who are successful: those who are humble in their prayer...”⁵

Linguistically, *khushū'* means sinking, subservience, and stillness. Allāh, Most High, says,

وَخَشَعَتِ الْأَصْوَاتُ لِرَحْمَنِ فَلَا تَسْمَعُ إِلَّا هَمْسًا

“Voices will be humbled before the All-Merciful and nothing but a whisper will be heard.”⁶

i.e. stilled and humbled. In this respect, the earth has been described as having *khushū'*, i.e. its being dry, bare, and low and not being elevated with plant and vegetation. Allāh, Most High, says,

وَمِنْ أَيْنِهِ جَاءَكَ تَرَى الْأَرْضَ خَشِعَةً فَإِذَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْهَا الْمَاءَ
أَهْبَطْتُ وَرَبَّتْ

“Among his Signs is that you see the earth laid bare

⁴ Suyūtī, *al-Durr*, vol. 14, pg. 277 who references it to ibn Abī Hātim and ibn Mardawayh.

⁵ *al-Mu’imīnūn* (23): 1-2

⁶ *Tā Hā* (20): 108

and then when We send down water on it, it quivers and swells.”⁷

(Technically), *khushū'* refers to the heart standing before the Lord in submissiveness, subservience, and focusing on Him.

It is also said that *khushū'* is to submit to the truth, however (the truth is that) this is one of its results. Therefore, amongst the signs of *khushū'* is that when the servant opposes the truth and is reminded of it, he accepts and willingly returns to it.

It is said that *khushū'* is the abating of the flames of lusts in the servants' breast and the dissipation of their smoke; replacing in their stead the blaze of the greatness (of Allāh) in the heart.

Junaid said, ‘*Khushū'* is the humbling of hearts to the One who knows the unseen.’

The Gnostics have agreed that the seat of *khushū'* is the heart and that its fruits sprout on the limbs and they display it. The Prophet (ﷺ) saw a man playing with his beard while praying and remarked, “If the heart of this person was humble, so too would his limbs be.”⁸

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, “*Taqwā'* is here,” pointing to his breast,

⁷ *Fusūlāt* (41): 39

⁸ It was ruled *mawdū'* by Albānī, *al-Da'īfah* #110 and *al-Irwā'* #373

⁹ *Taqwā*: to ward off evil.

Talq ibn Ḥabīb said upon being asked about *taqwā*, “That you perform the obedience of Allāh upon a light from Allāh, hoping for the reward of Allāh.

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and he said this three times.¹⁰

One of the Gnostics said, ‘Fine conduct on the outer is a clear indication of fine conduct on the inward. One of them saw a person showing *khushū'* on his shoulders and body and said, ‘O such-and-such, *khushū'* is here,’ pointing to his breast, ‘not here,’ pointing to his shoulders.

One of the Companions, Hudhayfah, would say, ‘Take refuge with Allāh from hypocritical *khushū'*? When asked what it was, he replied, ‘That you see the body humble and submissive while the heart is not.’¹¹

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You leave disobedience to Allāh upon a light from Allāh, fearing the punishment of Allāh.’

Recorded by ibn al-Mubārak, *al-Zuhd* #473 with a *ṣahīh isnād*.

Ibn al-Qayyim, *ar-Risālah al-Tabnīyyah*, p. 27, said, ‘This is the best that has been said concerning the definition of *taqwā* for indeed every action must have a beginning cause to it and an objective. An action can never be considered to be obedience and a cause to draw one closer to Allāh until its point of commencement and cause be unadulterated faith, not habit, not base desires, not the wish for praise and position, nor other such things. Its objective must be the reward that lies with Allāh and His good-pleasure, this being the definition of *ihtisāb*. This is why we often find the combined mention of these two foundations such as in his (ﷺ) saying, “Whoever fasts the month of Ramadān out of faith and *ihtisāb*...”.

His saying, ‘upon a light from Allāh’ points to the first foundation which is faith. His saying, ‘hoping for the reward of Allāh’ points to the second foundation which is *ihtisāb*.

¹⁰ Muslim #2564 on the authority of Abū Hurayrah.

¹¹ Ahmād, *al-Zuhd*, pg. 142 and ibn al-Mubārak, *al-Zuhd* #143 on the authority of Abū al-Dardā’.

‘Umar (*radīy Allāhu ‘anhu*) saw a person with his neck bowed in prayer and said, ‘O such-and-such raise your head for *khushū‘* lies not on the neck but in the heart.’

‘Ā’ishah (*radīy Allāhu ‘anha*) saw some youth trying to walk with an air of quietude, so she asked, ‘Who are they?’ Her colleagues replied, ‘Ascetics.’ She said, ‘When ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭab walked, he walked rapidly; when he spoke, he was heard; when he struck someone, it hurt; when he fed (the poor), he made sure they ate to their fill; he was the true ascetic!?’

Fuḍayl ibn ‘Iyād said, ‘It used to be disliked for a person to display more *khushū‘* than was in his heart.’

Hudhayfah said, ‘The first thing you will lose of your religion will be *khushū‘* and the last thing you will lose of your religion will be the prayer, and it is well possible that there is no good in a person who prays, and soon will come a time when you shall enter a large Masjid and not see a single person with *khushū‘*’.

Sahl said, ‘The person whose heart has *khushū‘* will not go near Shayṭān.’¹²

¹² Ibn al-Qayyim, *Madārij al-Sālikin*, vol. 1, pp. 417-418

APPENDIX II

Ibn al-Qayyim on Hypocritical *Khushū'*¹

The difference between (true) *khushū'* engendered by faith and the hypocritical *khushū'* is that the former takes place in the heart to Allāh and is conducted by veneration, magnification, sobriety, dignity, and shyness. The heart breaks for Allāh, combining dread, bashfulness, love, and shyness with the perception of Allāh's blessings and one's own transgressions. This necessarily engenders *khushū'* in the heart which is then followed by *khushū'* on the limbs.

Hypocritical *khushū'*, on the other hand, appears on the limbs; it is a mere pretence, the person affecting something that is not there since the heart is void of *khushū'*. One of the Companions would say, 'I take refuge with Allāh from hypocritical *khushū'*.' When asked what it was, he replied, 'That you see the body humble and submissive while the heart is not.'²

The one who has *khushū'* for the sake of Allāh is a servant, in

¹ Taken from 'The Humility of Prayer', Published by Dār us-Sunnah Publishers 2007, Birmingham, UK.

² Ahmad, *al-Zuhd*, pg. 142 and ibn al-Mubārak, *al-Zuhd* #143 on the authority of Abū al-Dardā'.

the breast of whom the flames of desires have abated and their smoke has dissipated, replacing in their stead radiance. The blaze of the greatness (of Allāh) has been ignited, and the lusts of the soul have died in the face of fear and sobriety which have, in turn, stilled the limbs and quietened the heart. The heart is content and at peace with Allāh, and it remembers Him; engulfed in the effusion of tranquillity descending from its Lord, it becomes meek and humble (*mukhbit*). The heart which is meek is the heart which is at peace and rest for the land which is *mukhbit* is land which is low-lying to which water flows and settles. The same applies to the heart: when it is *mukhbit*, i.e. it has achieved *khushū'*, it becomes like this piece of low-lying land to which water flows and settles.

The sign of such a heart is that (its owner) will prostrate before Allāh out of magnification and abject humility, broken before Him, never (desiring) to raise his head till the day he meets Him. This is the *khushū'* engendered by faith.

The arrogant heart, on the other hand, heaves and swells in its arrogance like a fast flowing river. It is like an elevated portion of the land at which water never settles. This is hypocritical *khushū'*: the person feigns quietude and affects stillness of limb by way of ostentation. In reality, his soul is raging with lusts and desires; outwardly he displays *khushū'*, but inwardly the valley serpent and jungle lion lurk between his shoulders, waiting to pounce on the prey.³

³ Ibn al-Qayyim, *al-Rāb*, pp. 346-347